SPECIAL ISSUE

AUTO EXPRESS

32 EXTRA PAGES | NO. 1,889 | £4.99

BRITAIN'S BEST NEW CARS

116-PAGE AWARDS SPECIAL 27 class winners, 91 brilliant buys and our 2025 Car of the Year

YJ25 STA
HY25 AZB
KY25 PPU
BK25 HWD
FIAT
RX25 GDF
HT25 CLX

2-29July Special

27

9 770967 450989

www.autoexpress.co.uk

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

SHOCK MERCEDES-AMG

Crazy 1,341bhp EV super-saloon revealed

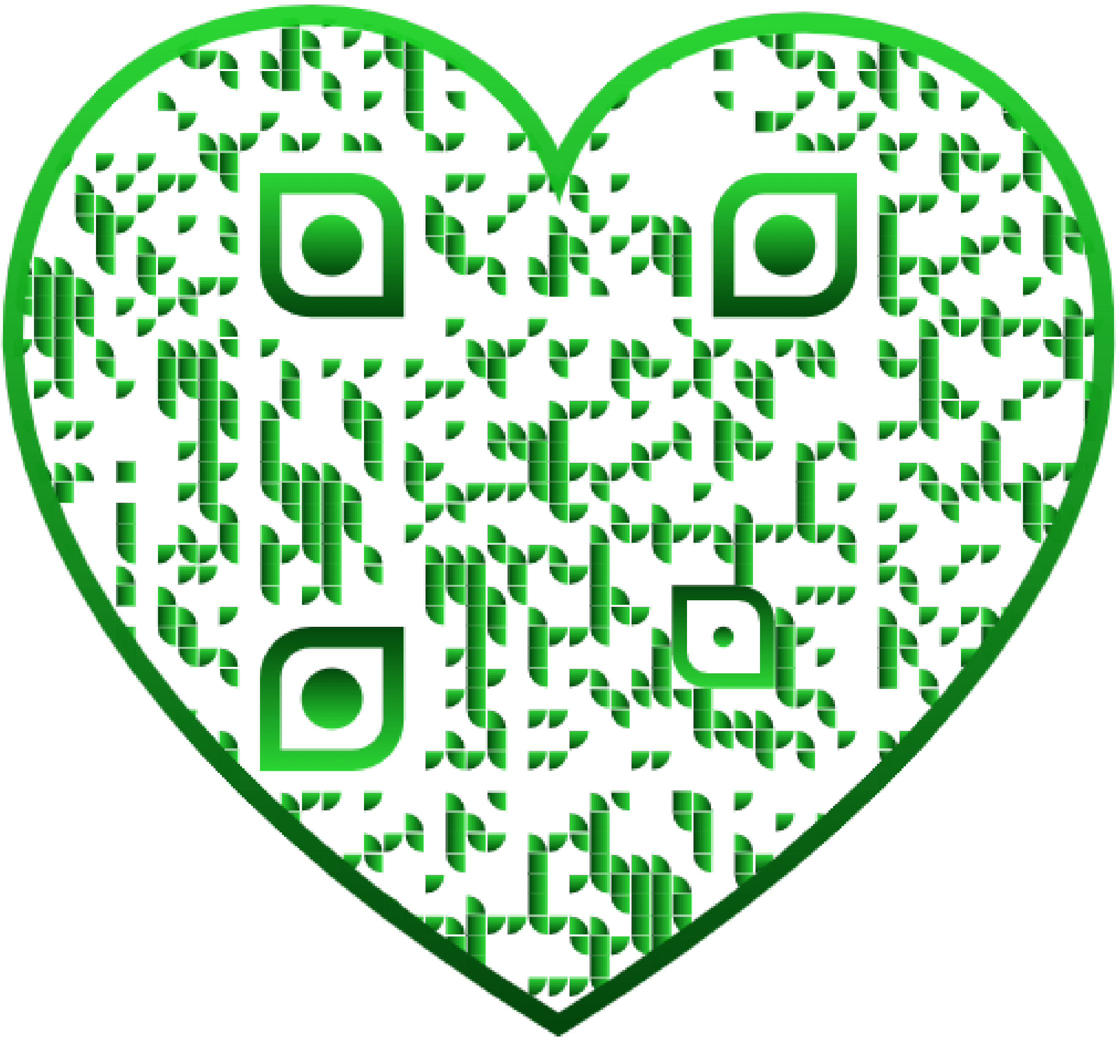
NEW FERRARI AMALFI

Reinvented Roma takes fight to Aston

TOP 10 CLASSIC CARS

Our team pick out their all-time greats

DRIVEN BMW M235 ● GENESIS G80 ● BABY BYD ● ELECTRIC G-WAGEN ● VOLVO EM90



LEXUS
NX
LEXUS NX PLUG-IN HYBRID
EXPERIENCE AMAZING BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

Model shown is MY25 NX 450h+ Fuel economy: Mpg (l/100km) (weighted combined): 282.4 (1) to 256.8 (1.1). Electric energy consumption (weighted combined): 2.5 to 2.3 miles/kWh. CO_2 emissions (weighted): 22 to 26 g/km. Equivalent all-electric range: 45.9 to 42.5 miles. Plug-in hybrid vehicle requiring mains electricity for charging. Figures obtained using a combination of battery power and fuel and only for comparison purposes. Only compare figures with other similar cars tested to the same technical procedures. These figures may not reflect real life driving results, which will depend upon several factors. UK specifications may vary

AUTO
EXPRESS

CONTENTS

NEWSWEEK

Mercedes-AMG GT XX 6
Crazy concept previews super-saloon

Ferrari Amalfi 10
Roma replaced as entry-level Ferrari

MG's Model Y 12
Goodwood reveal for sleek new SUV

Driver Power 14
UK's favourite car brand named

Nissan Qashqai 17
Economy boost for e-Power model

Toyota Land Cruiser 18
Iconic 4x4 to adopt hybrid power

FEATURES

Congestion charges 20
Drivers are fed up of being targeted

Team picks 34
Our favourite classics revealed

NEW CARS

BMW 2 Series Gran Coupé 22
Updated range-topper driven

Genesis Electrified G80 26
Revised exec tackles UK roads

BYD Dolphin Surf 28
Big plans for brand's smallest car

Mercedes G 580 EQ Tech. 30
Retro 4x4 gains EV power

Volvo EM90 32
Luxury MPV - but only for China

NEW CAR AWARDS

Britain's best cars revealed 39
27 categories, one overall winner

PRODUCTS

Hot kit 97
OSRAM launches dash cam range

New Products 98
Hi-tech charger from Optimate

Head torches 99
NightSearcher & Nitecore in spotlight

Snow foams 100
Megatest compares 20 rivals

BUYING CARS

Column 105
Should you buy a left-hooker?

Driver Power 106
Your verdict on life with the Audi A3

Buyer's guide 108
How to buy the best Nissan Figaro

Three-car garage 112
Cars of the Year for less than £20k

AUTO EXPRESS

NEW CAR AWARDS

NEW CAR AWARDS 2025

39 BRITAIN'S BEST NEW CARS REVEALED

Our annual celebration of the finest models on sale

91 CARS
27 CLASSES
ONE WINNER

YB25 DXL
EV03 FUN
KY25 EBK

6

AMG GT XX

Stunning new EV concept has 1,341bhp from revolutionary British tech

10

FERRARI AMALFI

Roma is reinvented for 2025 - and the changes are so extensive that the firm gives it a new name

22

BMW 2 SERIES GRAN COUPE

How successful are tweaks aimed at making car more engaging? We put it through its paces to find out

26

GENESIS ELECTRIFIED G80

Newly extended and updated Korean EV targets the executive car and chauffeur markets

REGULARS

BACK CHAT 114

Car buyers have never had it so good, says Mike Rutherford – and the Auto Express Awards prove it

SUBSCRIPTIONS 94

How to get Auto Express delivered direct to your door and save money

AEX
TEAM PICKS

FEATURE

OUR BEST EVER CLASSIC CARS 34

From British beauties to V8-engined beasts, our team name the all-time greats they'd love to drive

GWM

Make an entrance
(even in a supermarket car park)

ORA 03 GT
Find your different

gwmcars.co.uk

AUTO EXPRESS

CONTACT US
email: firstname.lastname@autoexpress.co.uk
Social: facebook.com/autoexpress @AutoExpress
Subscriptions: 0330 3339491
customercare@subscribe.autoexpress.co.uk

Director of content and publishing: Sarah Perks
Editor: Paul Barker
Editor-at-large: Phil McNamara
Deputy editor: Richard Ingram

News, reviews and tests
Chief reviewer: Alex Ingram
Senior test editor: Dean Gibson
Executive editor: Paul Adam
Senior staff writer: Jordan Katsianis
Senior news reporter: Alastair Crooks
News reporter: Ellis Hyde
Chief columnist: Mike Rutherford

Consumer
Current affairs editor: Chris Rosamond
Consumer reporter: Tom Jervis

Products
Products editor: Tom Barnard

Digital
Head of digital content: Steve Walker
Web producer: Pete Baiden
Online reviews editor: Max Adams
Senior content editor: Shane Wilkinson
Content editor: Ryan Birch
DrivingElectric content editor: George Armitage

Design, pictures and production
Creative director: Darren Wilson
Deputy art editor: George Vedmore
Picture editor: Dawn Grant
Senior photographer: Pete Gibson
Chief sub-editor: Andy Pringle
Sub-editor: Paul Alton
Production design manager: Dave Kinnard

Film team **Head of film:** Jack Scotton

Special contributors
Vicki Butler-Henderson, Sam Naylor, Steve Sutcliffe, Andreas Conradt, Euan Doig, Sarah Bradley, Rob Keenan, Otis Clay, Craig Cheetham, Graham Hope

Advertising, promotions and publishing
Strategic partnerships managers:
Pierre Clements, Miles Taylor
Senior operations lead: Kerry Lambird
Senior production manager: Dan Stark
Head of subscriptions marketing & customer experience: Hannah Charlton

Carwow Studio Limited
Directors: John Veichmanis, David Santoro

Subscription prices
UK: £145.00 **Europe:** £240.00 **ROW:** £260.00

Content syndication sales
Our content is available for syndication.
E-mail licensingsyndication@carwow.co.uk

Auto Express is published weekly by Carwow Studio Limited. Registered in England and Wales no. 13018565. Registered address: 2nd Floor, Verde Building, 10 Bressenden Place, London, SW1E 5DH. VAT number GB 364 5579 62. Carwow Studio Limited is part of the Carwow Group, owned by Carwow Ltd.

Neither the whole of this publication nor any part of it may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means without permission of the publishers. Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office. Pictures submitted in Auto Express are sent at owner's risk. While every care is taken, neither Auto Express nor its agents accept any liability for loss or damage.

Copyright Carwow Studio Limited 2025. All rights reserved.
Auto Express is a registered trade mark.

Printed by Walstead Roche, Victoria Business Park,
Roche, Victoria, Saint Austell PL26 8LX
Distribution: Marketforce (UK) Ltd, 121-141 Westbourne Terrace,
London W2 6QA. Tel: 0330 390 6464, hello@marketforce.co.uk

AUTO EXPRESS ROAD TESTS

All Auto Express tests are carried out at private proving grounds where cars are driven to the limit and performance tested. Auto Express also assesses the cars over many miles of mixed public roads before delivering its Road Test Verdict.

Auto Express is part of the
Auto Bild Group network of magazines

recycle
When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.

THIS WEEK

OUR annual celebration of the best new cars is one of our favourite issues of the year. Once the ridiculous amount of hard work has been completed, the issue is off to press and everything uploaded to our website, that is...!

Every year we seem to say the competition is hotter than ever, but that's only because it's true. In the final reckoning, there were five cars that could easily have claimed the ultimate accolade of 2025 Auto Express Car of the Year.

Whatever you need your vehicle to do, we've exhaustively tested every model out there to put together a three-car shortlist for each category – so if you don't agree with our winner, there are a couple of other excellent options.

> **"TO HIGHLIGHT THE STRENGTH IN DEPTH ACROSS THE CAR INDUSTRY, WE HAVE NO FEWER THAN 17 DIFFERENT BRANDS WITH THEIR NAME ON A WINNER'S TROPHY"**

Our winners are – in the opinion of our test team, which has decades of experience behind it – the best in their class. But we know that in any given sector of the market, buyers have very different requirements around brand, pricing and appeal of different models. So you won't always agree with our king of the castle.

But every one of the cars across our 55-page New Car Awards extravaganza is bloomin' brilliant. From city cars to supercars, we love them all, and the conversations about the winners were always enthusiastic and animated, no matter what sort of model we were discussing.

Some categories have been retained by our 2024 winners, but the car world moves fast and we have a lot of new models that have come straight in at the top of the class. As if to highlight the strength in depth across the car industry, we have no fewer than 17 different brands with their name on a winner's trophy, and 25 different marques were commended across the categories.

There are very few dominant brands; a couple collected four or five awards each, but there are particular high points in most manufacturers' model ranges, and we've picked them out, along with our choice of the sweet spot in the line-up for each of the winning cars. So enjoy our walk-through of the very best in the business, culminating in the 2025 Auto Express Car of the Year. We think it's a very worthy winner, highly recommendable and an all-round great new arrival. Because that's the point of the Auto Express New Car Awards.

PAUL BARKER

Paul.Barker@autoexpress.co.uk

EDITOR'S VIEW

Visit **autoexpress.co.uk** for all the latest new car news

AUTO EXPRESS

FIRST FOR NEWS

10 OFFICIAL
FERRARI AMALFI
Roma reinvented for 2025

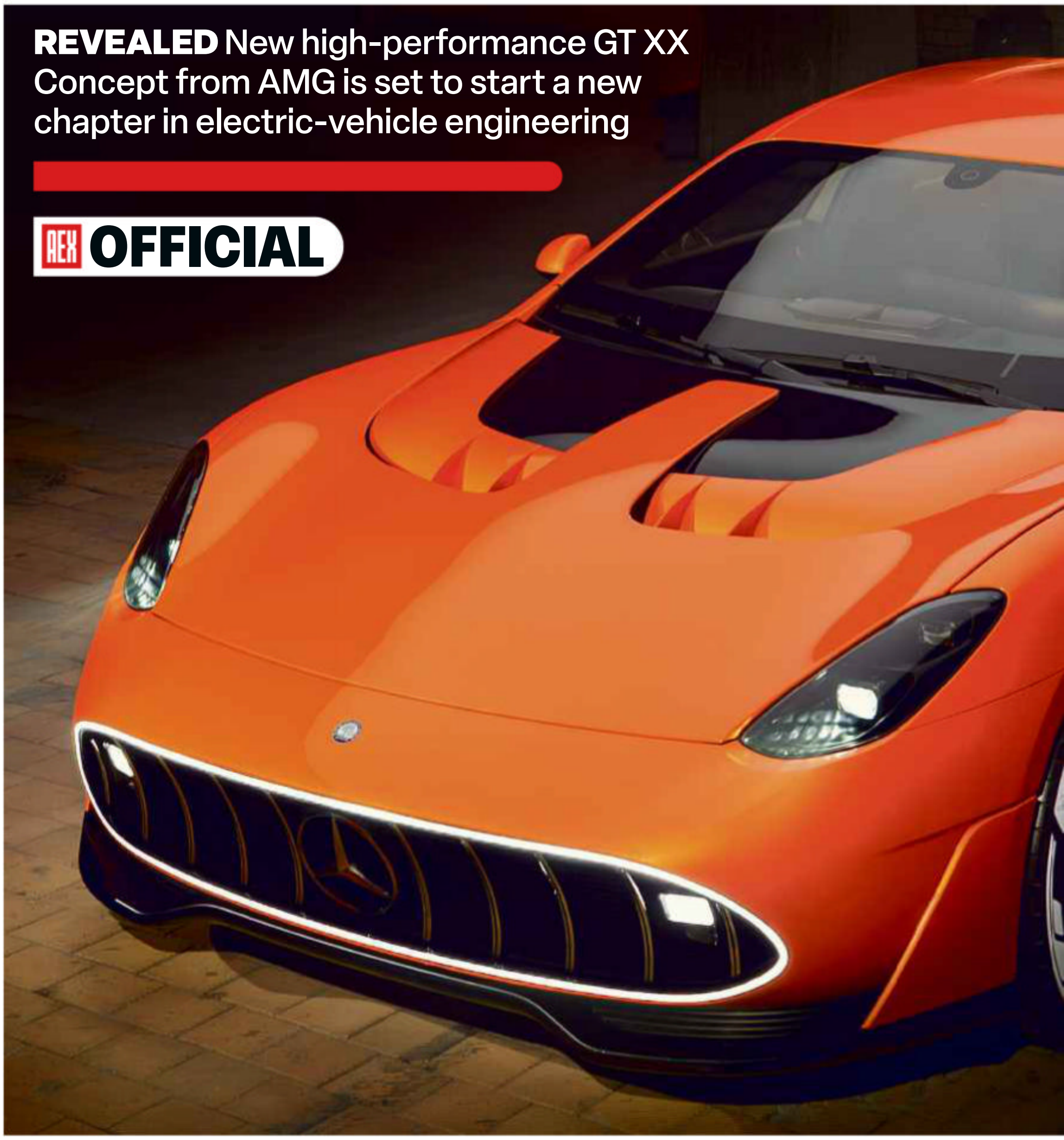
ALL WILL BE REVEALED

12 TEASED
MG'S MODEL Y
Goodwood unveiling for new SUV

15 SCOOP
SKODA OCTAVIA
CEO reveals plans for family car

TOP STORY Mercedes-AMG GT XX

HOT GT SET

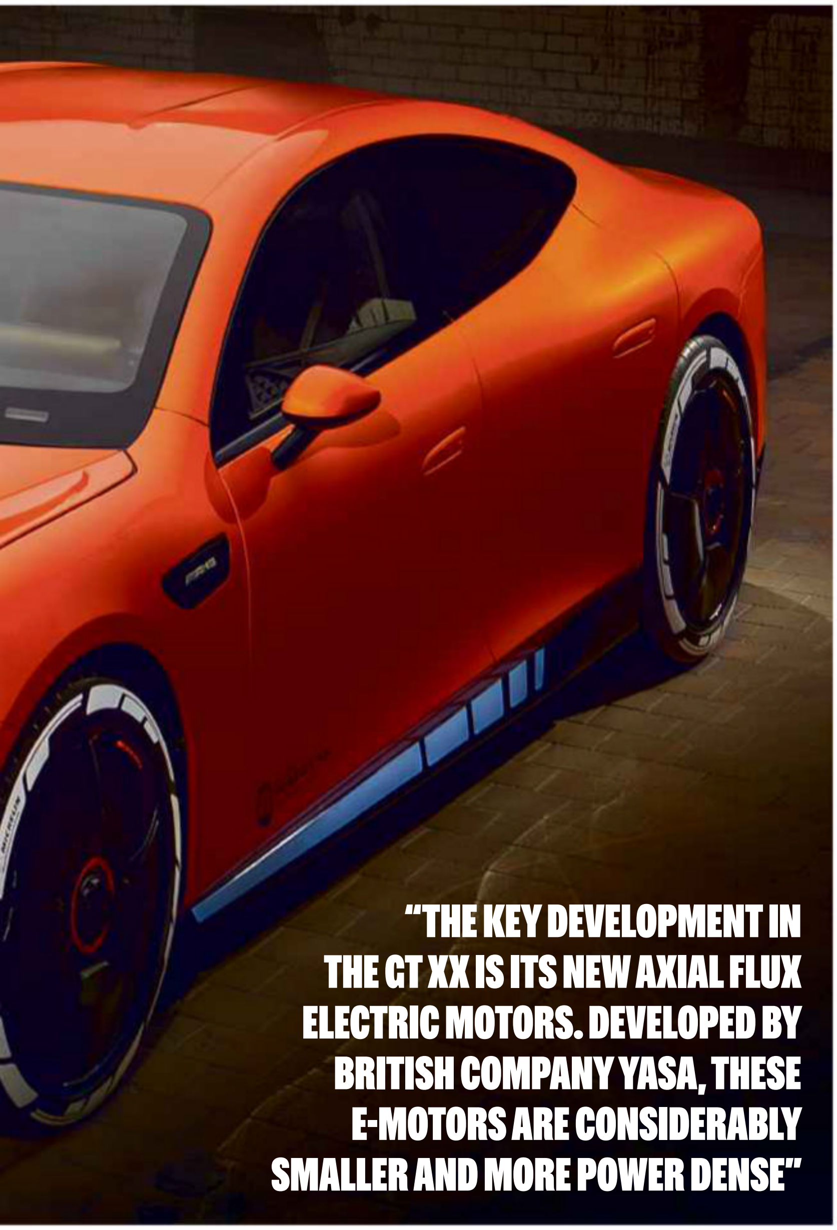


REVEALED New high-performance GT XX Concept from AMG is set to start a new chapter in electric-vehicle engineering

OFFICIAL

ALTERATIONS
The concept's design will be tweaked for the production model to create more room inside, but many of the styling elements will appear

S TONE FOR AMG



“THE KEY DEVELOPMENT IN THE GT XX IS ITS NEW AXIAL FLUX ELECTRIC MOTORS. DEVELOPED BY BRITISH COMPANY YASA, THESE E-MOTORS ARE CONSIDERABLY SMALLER AND MORE POWER DENSE”

Jordan Katsianis

Jordan.Katsianis@autoexpress.co.uk

MERCEDES has revealed a brand-new concept car that it thinks will change the world of high-performance EVs. The Mercedes-AMG GT XX is a four-door supercar that packs some pretty intimidating figures, but behind them is a range of new powertrain technologies that will proliferate into other Mercedes models, including one that’ll take a similar form to this four-door concept from as early as next year.

The key development in the GT XX is its new axial flux electric motors. Developed by British company Yasa, these e-motors are considerably smaller and more power dense than existing technology, and their introduction represents a change that is as significant as when fuel injection replaced carburettors.

An axial flux motor works in a very different way to existing e-motor tech, fundamentally changing the internal structure and axis of rotation. This has many benefits, but the most important are that an axial flux motor is around one third of the size, and about two thirds the weight, of an equivalent current e-motor, yet has three times the power density.

The GT XX mounts two motors on the rear axle and one on the front for a tri-motor layout. The majority of the power is derived from the rear axle, while the front unit cuts in to assist with traction and help produce the 1,341bhp peak power figure.

HI-TECH
AMG says features such as the active vanes in the wheels will appear on models in the future

No official torque figure has been shared yet, however Jörg Miska, the CEO of Yasa, assured us it would be “thousands of Newton metres”. The set-up also allows torque vectoring, which Yasa has experience of in the hybrid supercars – such as the Ferrari SF90 – that use its motors. However, he told us, the GT XX takes things to “a completely new level”.

AMG is also working to give the upcoming production car a unique character among EVs, with the brand experimenting with computerised engine noises that have been teased on its social media channels. In the video, a prototype of the production car we’ll see next year features a bassy, V8-like growl, and Mercedes’ chief technology officer Markus Schäfer has hinted this will be paired with a Hyundai Ioniq 5 N-like virtual gearbox and engine-mapping system to deliver “everything that you expect in a V8, V12 or race-orientated AMG”.

Speaking to Auto Express ahead of the GT XX’s unveiling, Schäfer acknowledged that “bringing hardcore V8 fans to an electric vehicle is something that is definitely a challenge, and offering just a pure-electric car doesn’t do the job”.

As a result, this concept, and the forthcoming production model, are

▶

MARKUS SCHAFER Chief technology officer, Mercedes

“BRINGING HARDCORE V8 FANS TO AN EV IS A CHALLENGE, AND OFFERING A PURE-ELECTRIC CAR DOESN’T DO THE JOB”

supposed to tell a "great story" through the technology on board. As Schäfer put it: "What is this axial flux motor that I have in there? How does the car feel in terms of noise, in terms of sound level, in terms of the vibration, in terms of the gearshift?

"It has to touch the emotional side of you, and if it doesn't, it doesn't do the job," he added. "But this is what the Mercedes-AMG cars do, and that's exactly what we transferred piece by piece into this GT XX."

Yet high-performance e-motors are nothing without a battery pack capable of making the most of them, and in this case AMG has produced its own bespoke high-performance battery that can manage extreme and – crucially – repeatable power delivery. AMG has not released the specific capacity of the battery, or told us how much range the GT XX could offer – only that it would be "significant". But the creators have touted the benefits of its new tall and thin cylindrical cells, which sit within a temperature-controlled housing under the cabin floor.

Another innovation is that the car's electrical system runs at "over" 800V, beating all current competition, and allows it to achieve a colossal average charging speed of more than 850kW – a figure that's far beyond even the most advanced chargers currently in the UK, futureproofing itself for the battery-charging infrastructure that Mercedes has ambitions of installing across Europe. These speeds are enough to add around 250 miles of range in about five minutes.

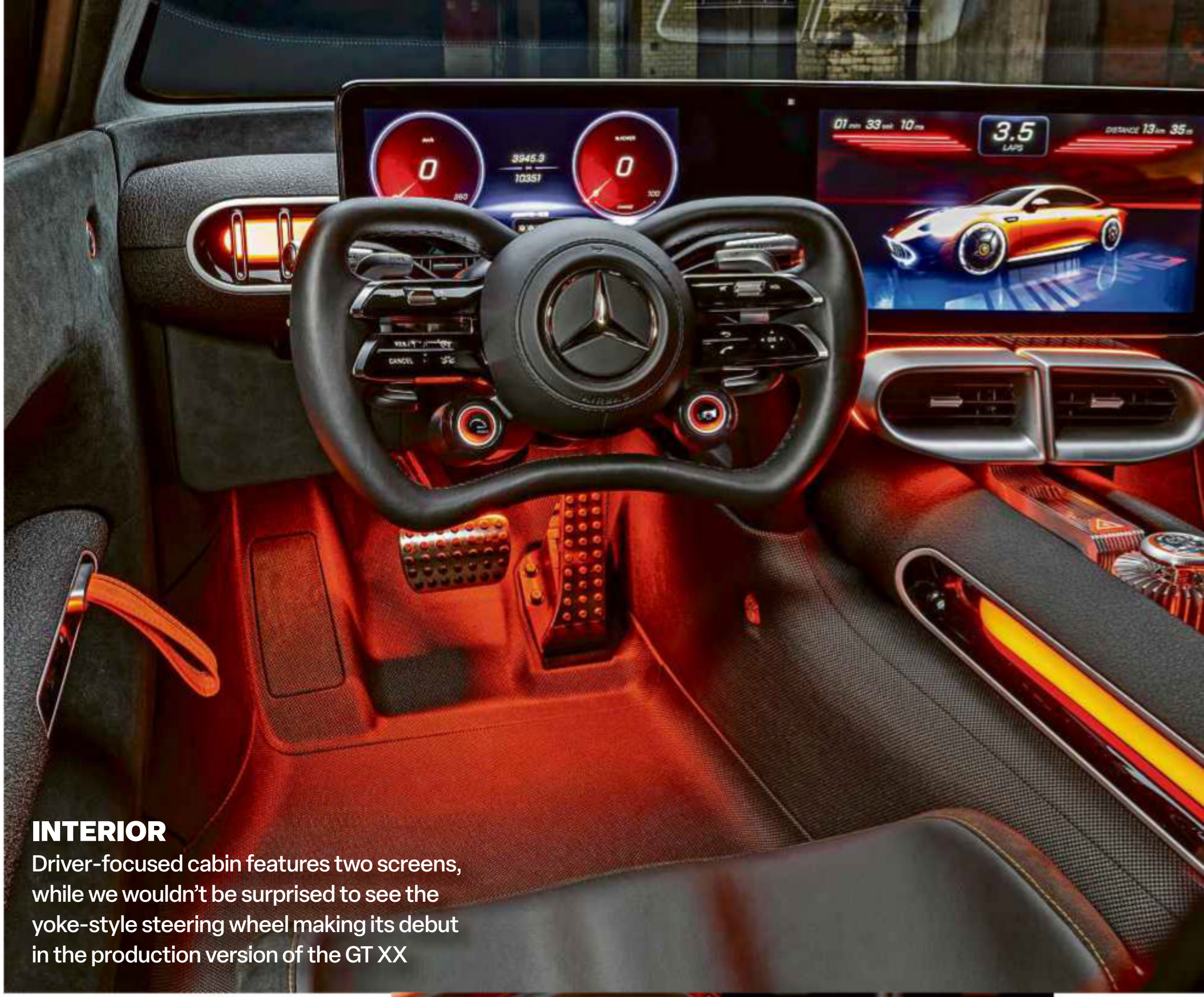
The design of the GT XX harks back to the experimental Mercedes C111, which was similarly used as a test bed for new technologies. The new car also represents the next evolution of the Vision AMG concept from 2022, and the Vision One concept presented the year after that. All three preview AMG's new electric flagship that we'll finally see next year.

The GT XX's extremely low and sleek shape will be amended slightly for production, allowing for a little more cabin space than the very tight concept. Its overall design, however, will be largely carried across, including the low-mounted grille, sleek sides, huge wheels and cut-off rear end with its six circular tail-lights.

The concept has a few flourishes – for example, the active vanes built within the wheel spokes, illuminated sills made from luminescent paint, and a dot-matrix panel between the rear lights – but AMG is adamant that all these elements are in direct development for future production models. The concept also does without any rear windscreen, which will change for the production model.

Inside the concept, the cabin is pared back and minimal. While AMG didn't directly confirm it, the yoke-style steering wheel is being readied in combination with fly-by-wire steering, and could potentially make its first appearance on the production model. The concept's digital set-up also looks to be pretty production-ready, featuring a combination of an 11.25-inch instrument cluster and a 14-inch display in the centre angled towards the driver.

With its new car, Mercedes-AMG might appear to be hitting a slightly stagnant place in the market that's already occupied by cars such as the Porsche Taycan and Lotus Emeya, but the project is about much more than an expensive four-door EV. The GT XX Concept is a mission statement for the next generation of EV technology that will eventually trickle down to benefit development in every corner of the new-car market.



INTERIOR
Driver-focused cabin features two screens, while we wouldn't be surprised to see the yoke-style steering wheel making its debut in the production version of the GT XX

"THE GT XX IS A MISSION STATEMENT FOR
OF TECH THAT WILL EVENTUALLY TRICK
DEVELOPMENT IN EVERY CORNER OF T

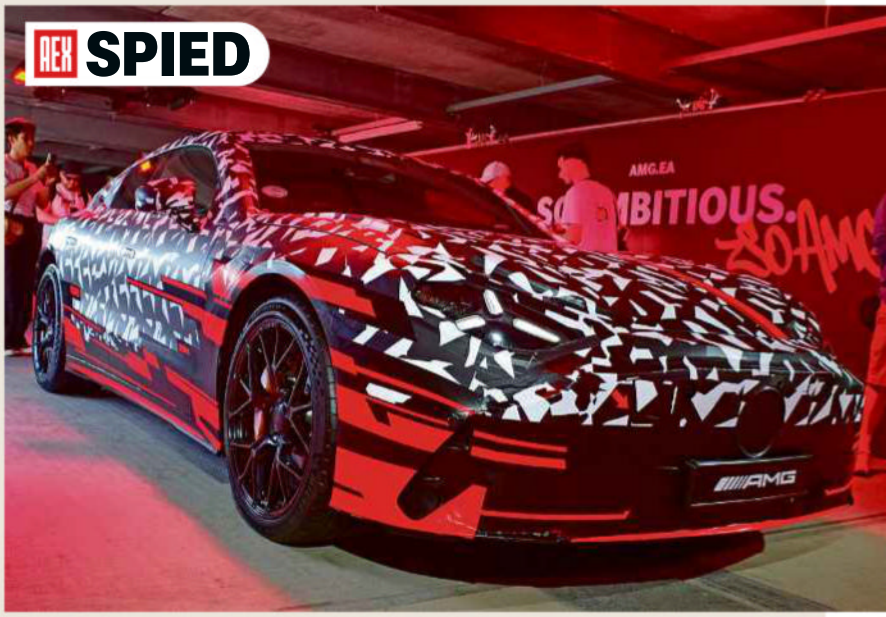
THE NEXT GENERATION
LE DOWN TO BENEFIT EV
HE NEW-CAR MARKET"

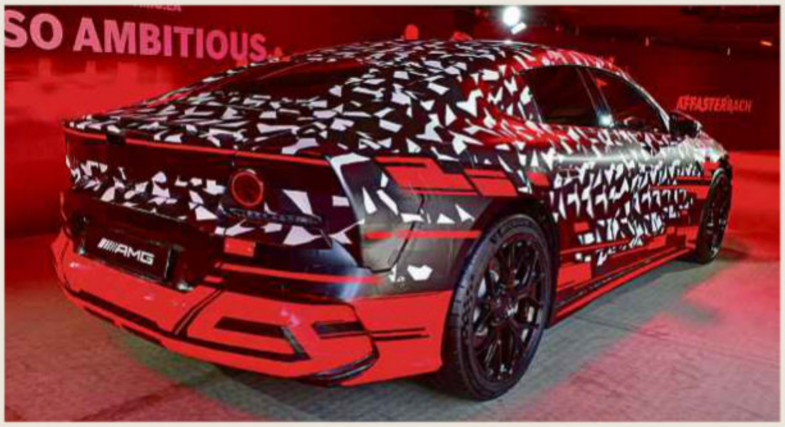
PLUS Production car caught in the open at unveiling of GT XX

Camouflaged prototype gives away details of forthcoming super-saloon

Ellis Hyde

Ellis.Hyde@autoexpress.co.uk





AEX AUTO Express managed to get up close and personal with AMG's all-new, power-hungry super-saloon after we spotted prototypes of the Lotus Emeya challenger lurking around the performance brand's headquarters in Affalterbach, Germany during the reveal event for the GT XX concept.

Mercedes chief technology officer Markus Schäfer described the new super-saloon to us as "a Swiss watch in the electric age". He explained: "if you look at the components, the attention to detail and how we crafted this car, we didn't just take every component off a shelf somewhere. It has a very unique technology."

Schäfer sees the car's axial flux motors as the equivalent of the AMG's iconic V8 or V12 engines for its future EVs. Driving the new model, he promises, is "an emotional experience. It has to be authentic when it comes to power, driveability and track performance. But the AMG is also an emotional experience from an acoustic standpoint, from noise, vibration and harshness. And that's exactly what you can expect in this car."

Much of the AMG GT XX's aggressive yet streamlined design appears to have been carried over to the production car. For instance, despite the heavy camouflage, we can make out the outline of AMG's signature (and absolutely gigantic) Panamericana grille, which will include Mercedes' three-pointed star sitting proudly at its centre.

Air curtains on either side of the grille, big shoulders, a long bonnet and circular tail-lights also feature, but some details are different. Most noticeably, the headlights are bigger on the prototype than the concept, and feature a three-pointed star motif, similar to that on the new CLA. It also looks like there is indeed a rear windscreen on the road car.

ON VIEW
Despite the disguise, the huge grille – including space for the Mercedes badge – (top) is clear to see. This car differs from the concept by having larger headlights and a rear screen (above)

MARKUS SCHAFER Chief technology officer, Mercedes

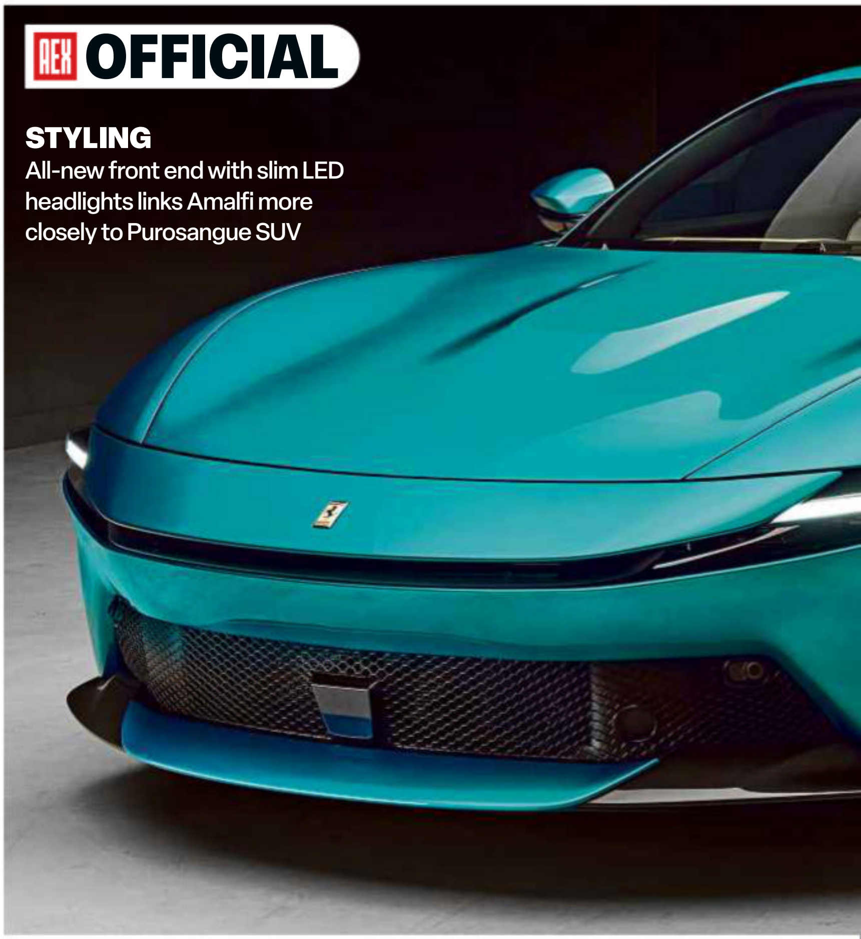
> "IT HAS TO BE AUTHENTIC WHEN IT COMES TO DRIVEABILITY AND TRACK PERFORMANCE. BUT THE AMG IS ALSO AN EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE FROM AN ACOUSTIC STANDPOINT"

New Amalfi replaces R

Jordan Katsianis

Jordan.Katsianis@autoexpress.co.uk

REVEALED Mid-life facelift and updates are so substantial that they require



OFFICIAL

STYLING
All-new front end with slim LED headlights links Amalfi more closely to Purosangue SUV

THE entry-level model in Ferrari's range has undergone a heavy update, with the Roma turning into the Amalfi. While the two cars are similar in layout and hardware, Ferrari says the changes are so significant that a name change was required.

At first glance, it seems like a reasonable claim, because the front end has been completely redesigned with a fresh face that draws a closer connection to the Purosangue than the car's more classical GT forebears.

Hidden away in a slim opening sit the LED headlights, topped by an LED lightbar and a small intake above. Within the black bar between them are some of the car's sensors, but the main radar still sits prominently below.

The lower grille is now one large wraparound opening covered in a delicate mesh, and both the bonnet and front wings are new with crisper lines and less rounded volumes. Yet although every metal body panel is new, the Amalfi's fundamental structure is the same as the Roma's, with the windscreen and front windows shared with its predecessor.

At the rear, the Roma's somewhat bulbous styling has given way to a more technical look reminiscent of the 12Cilindri. The twin-element lights now sit in a hollowed-out ledge, which also houses the boot release. Just above, there's a small active wing that can produce up to 110kg more downforce than the unit on the Roma even in its most aggressive position.

More substantive changes have been made in the cabin, though, thanks to a new dashboard and centre console that give the feeling of more space without increasing any of the dimensions. The main new element is a central bridge that bisects the front seats, replacing the Roma's more stylised console. And while many buyers will specify this in carbon fibre, the standard fixture is a solid piece of anodised aluminium milled from a single block, adding to Ferrari's roster of high-quality leathers, carbon and Alcantara.

The very tight rear seats are as before, and as in most rival cars, only suitable for small children. Behind these, the reasonable 273-litre boot will swallow a couple of carry-on suitcases. To fit a set of golf clubs, you'll have to drop the rear seats.

Ferrari says it has listened to its customers and made some major changes to the digital interfaces. First, the haptic steering wheel buttons have been replaced with physical controls. These should make the complex menus in the instrument cluster easier to navigate. There's also a red starter button in place of the former touch control – word has it that it was a particularly unpopular element in this era of Ferrari.

The second big change is a more mainstream horizontal display on the dash borrowed from the 12Cilindri. This fits underneath the new dashtop that's also much closer in style and layout to the Amalfi's sibling, giving a more open feeling to the cabin than the Roma's more intimate design.

Under the new skin Ferrari has focused on widening the remit of the existing hardware through a couple of new technical features. The first is a new ECU, which is able to better integrate all the various chassis systems, while the new braking set-up should see a breakthrough in terms of feel and consistency, it's claimed. Other elements, including the springs and dampers, have also been replaced, giving the Amalfi a wider range of abilities between sports car and GT than the Roma.

The heart of any Ferrari is its engine, and the existing 3.9-litre V8 has been re-engineered to produce slightly more power at 631bhp, and 760Nm of torque. This is sent through the existing eight-speed dual-clutch transmission to the rear wheels, with an electronically controlled differential helping to distribute it.

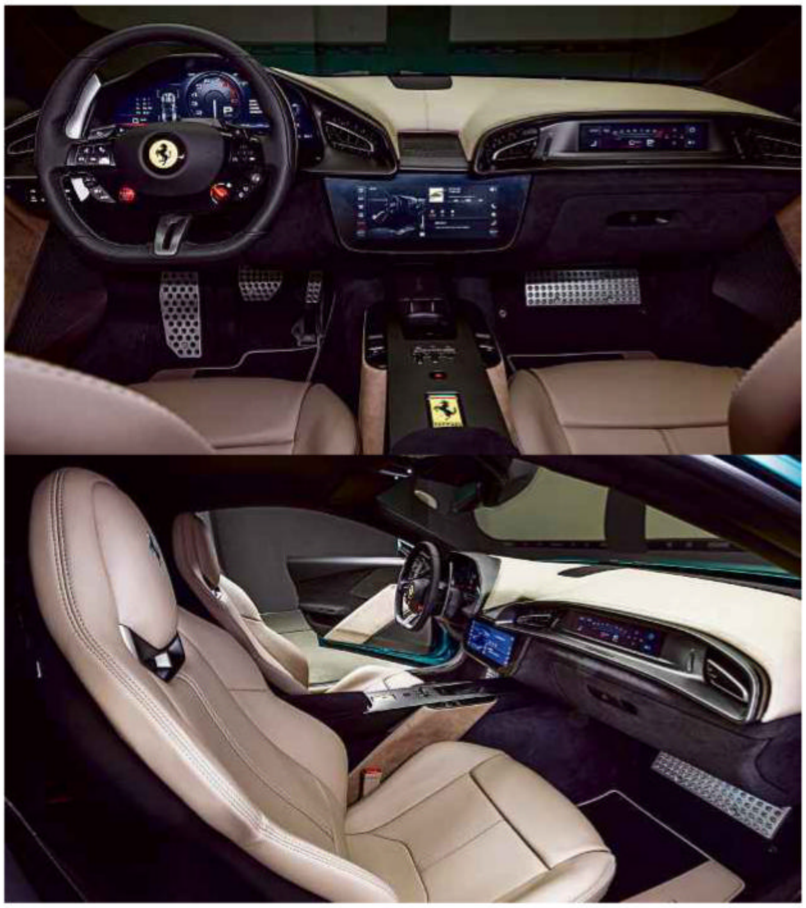
These changes have come at an opportune moment, with the GT class about to gain a plethora of updated models. Aston Martin's more powerful DB12 is already a very impressive offering, but a new S model is only a few months away, likely to pack more power than its current 671bhp. Bentley is also working on an even faster variant of the already brilliant Continental GT Speed, and Porsche is on the cusp of introducing a new hybrid-assisted 911 Turbo at the sportier end of the spectrum.

So when the Amalfi arrives in the first quarter of 2026 with a starting price likely to be around £200,000, it'll have quite the array of new rivals.

> **"THE HEART OF ANY FERRARI IS ITS ENGINE AND THE 3.9-LITRE V8 HAS BEEN RE-ENGINEERED TO PRODUCE SLIGHTLY MORE POWER"**

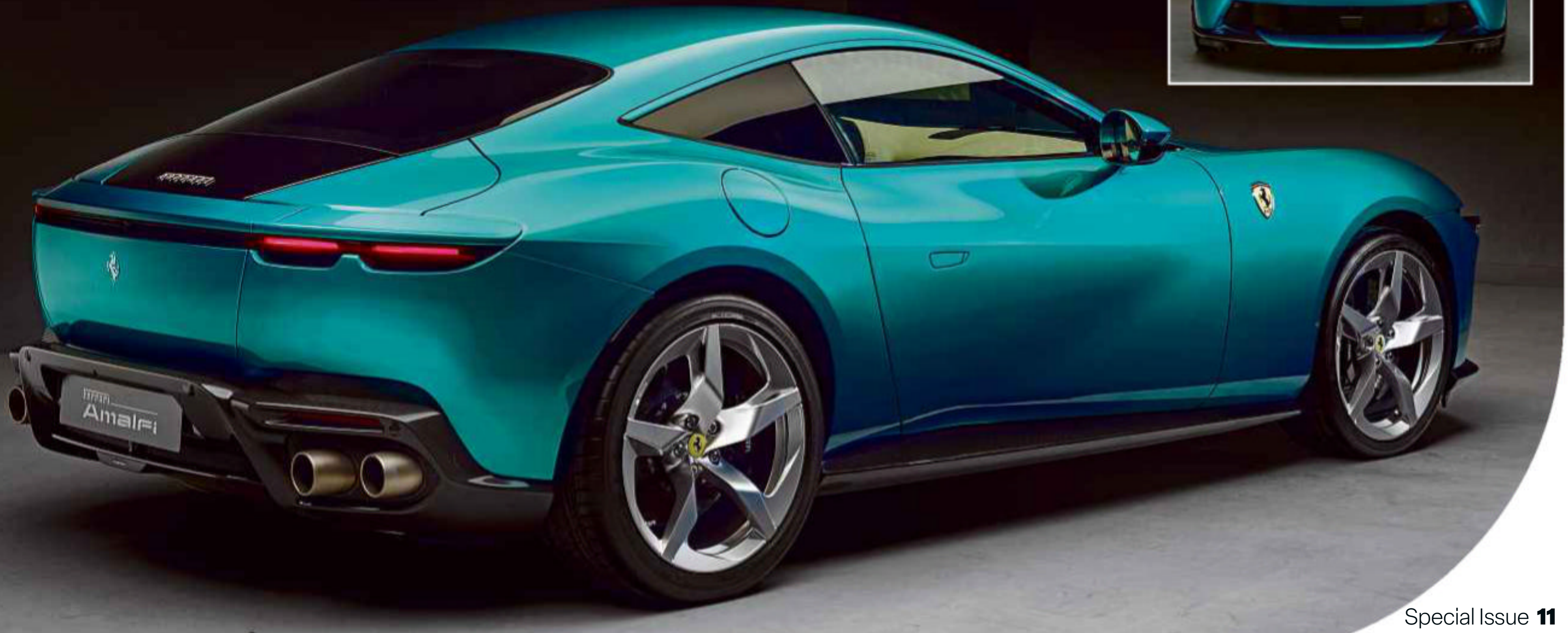
oma in Ferrari’s line-up

d a new name for brand’s baby



INTERIOR
New dash and centre console (right) are designed to make cabin feel more spacious, although it’s really no bigger

> “THE ROMA’S SOMEWHAT BULBOUS REAR STYLING HAS GIVEN WAY TO A MORE TECHNICAL LOOK REMINISCENT OF THE 12CILINDRI”



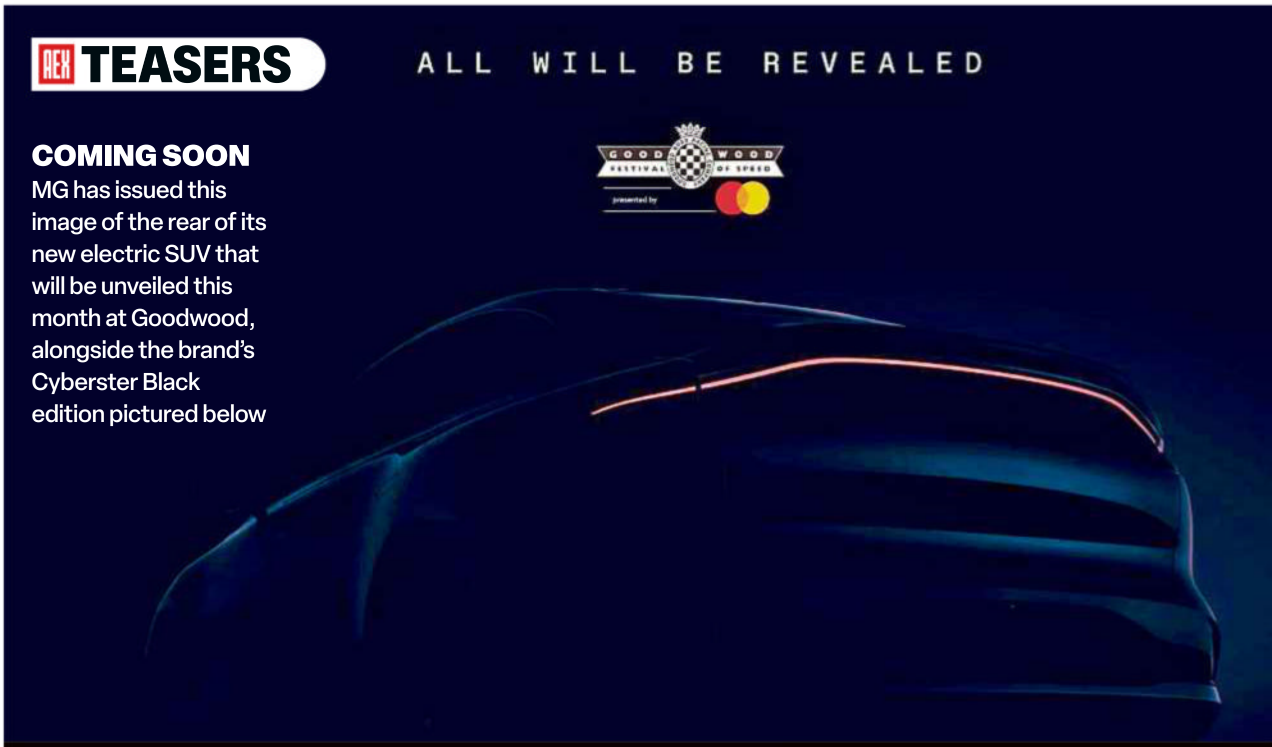
New MG electric SUV s

Ellis Hyde

Ellis.Hyde@autoexpress.co.uk

REVEALED MG plans to unveil two new EVs this month, both expected to be

TEASERS



COMING SOON MG has issued this image of the rear of its new electric SUV that will be unveiled this month at Goodwood, alongside the brand's Cyberster Black edition pictured below

> "ALSO ON DISPLAY AT THE FESTIVAL OF SPEED WILL BE THE NEW MG CYBERSTER BLACK EDITION AND THE BIG, BRUTISH MG CYBER X CONCEPT THAT WAS UNVEILED EARLIER THIS YEAR"

MG looks set to unveil a swoopy new electric SUV at this month's Goodwood Festival of Speed, which could finally give the Chinese brand a rival to the best-selling Tesla Model Y, as well as the Skoda Enyaq and XPeng G6.

The single teaser image of the mysterious car's rear end that MG has released so far doesn't show much, but the silhouette looks identical to that of the new MG IM6 that recently went on sale in Australia and Thailand – as do the light bar and spoiler. The car is also known in other markets as the IM Motors LS6.

You might not have heard of IM Motors before, but it's a premium electric car brand owned by MG's Chinese parent company SAIC Motor. We were told the marque was going to launch in the UK sometime this year, but it looks like IM Motors cars will now be badged as MGs in the UK. This is how it works in Australia, where the models are sold under the banner of 'IM Presented by MG Motor'.

In Australia, there are three versions of the MG IM6 available: Premium, Platinum and Performance. Entry-level models feature a 75kWh battery and a 291bhp rear-mounted electric motor, which offer 280 miles of range, 0-62mph in 6.8 seconds and a 153kW maximum charging speed.

The other two variants have a larger 100kWh battery that's good for up to 345 miles on a single charge, and upgrade from a 400V electrical architecture to an 800V one, as in the XPeng or the Hyundai Ioniq 5. This allows them to charge at a lightning-fast 396kW, quicker than any Porsche Taycan, meaning a 30 to 80 per cent top-up can be done in 15 minutes, if you can find a fast enough charger.

On top of all that, the MG IM6 Performance version gets a 767bhp dual-motor set-up that lets it do 0-62mph in 3.4 seconds – the same as the Hyundai Ioniq 5 N. Other tech on offer in the IM6 includes a 26.3-inch touchscreen spanning the dashboard, a separate 10.5-inch touchscreen for controlling the car's functions, rear-wheel steering, intelligent air suspension and 'one-touch' hands-free parking abilities. Whether all these features will be offered in the UK remains to be seen.

MG has announced it will also unveil another new EV at Goodwood, which we suspect will be the MG IM5 that's also already on sale in Australia. The BYD Seal and Tesla Model 3 rival can do 0-62mph in 3.2 seconds and boasts up to 407 miles of claimed range on a single charge.

Also on display at the Festival of Speed will be the new MG Cyberster Black Edition and the big, brutish MG Cyber X concept that was unveiled earlier this year.

MG IM6 The EV is already on sale in some markets and we suspect it will be the car launched at Goodwood

et for Goodwood reveal

re-badged models from premium sister brand IM Motors

AEX OFFICIAL

Range Rover SV (above) and the Stealth Edition (below) are both new

Range Rover Sport SV in series production

Jordan Katsianis

Jordan.Katsianis@autoexpress.co.uk

WHEN Land Rover revealed the new Range Rover Sport SV, it did so with a collection of limited-run special editions with curated specs and special colour options.

But after nearly 18 months on sale, buyers can now order a full series-production SV in a range of colour and trim options with a starting price of £139,995 – that's around £35k less than the least expensive 'Edition 2' spec, which is now off-sale.

A large part of the price drop is due to the expensive options fitted to both of the previous Edition 1 and 2 models. These included elements such as vast carbon ceramic brakes. These will still be available on the basic SV model, but now need to be specified separately.

Land Rover hasn't totally eliminated the curated editions, though, with a new SV Black now available at £154,975. It features all-black design elements that are unique to this model. The cabin is upholstered in black Windsor leather, with gloss-black trim inserts and tread plates.

There are no technical changes to any SV model, so it continues with its 627bhp 4.4-litre V8 engine, plus the trick 6D suspension system that combines air-springs with a hydraulically cross-linked damper arrangement.

There is also a new Range Rover Sport Stealth Edition. This model has a similar combination of blacked-out details, but can had with black or grey paint. It's based on the mid-range Dynamic SE, and can be paired with either a D300 diesel or P460e plug-in hybrid powertrain option, starting at £101,570.

Sleek new Kia Sportage on sale now from £31k

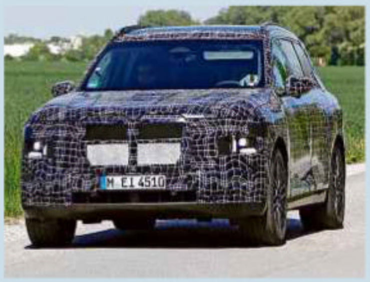
ORDER books are open for the new Kia Sportage, with prices starting from £30,885 – only slightly more than the outgoing version of the brand's global best-seller. The already bold-looking mid-size SUV has received a sleek makeover, a slick new interior and a much simpler trim structure.

The Sportage is available with either a pure-petrol engine or an updated full-hybrid powertrain, which costs from £34,425. A plug-in hybrid will rejoin the line-up later this year. All three models will be available in the new entry-level Pure specification, plus GT-Line and GT-Line S.

Standard kit includes a 12.3-inch touchscreen, wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, sat-nav, a reversing camera, parking sensors all-round and multiple driver-assistance features. Smart cruise control with stop and go is also included on models without a manual gearbox.

Entry-level Pure models feature 17-inch alloys, LED headlights, a 4.2-inch driver's display and black cloth. Upgrading to GT-Line (a jump of £2,500) also adds 18 or 19-inch rims and sportier styling. GT-Line S models cost £5,200 over the GT-Line and go all out with the equipment list.

Kia's new Sportage is on sale now



Automedia

Mk2 BMW X7 spotted testing for the first time

WE only got confirmation last month that BMW's largest SUV, the X7, will return for a second generation, but we've already caught it testing as it's prepared for an expected launch in 2026.

BMW subtly announced the new model during its Q1 financial results call this year, during which the firm revealed it had incurred the research and development costs for the upcoming Neue Klasse line-up (which will launch later this year with the new iX3) as well as "successor models to the BMW X5 and BMW X7".

News of a fifth-generation X5 was no surprise, since we've seen it testing with some clear design influences from the Neue Klasse concepts. As with the new X5, due in 2026, the X7, which may also arrive next year, looks like it'll also borrow Neue Klasse styling.

What is immediately obvious from this camouflaged test car is that the X7 will retain its position as BMW's biggest SUV.

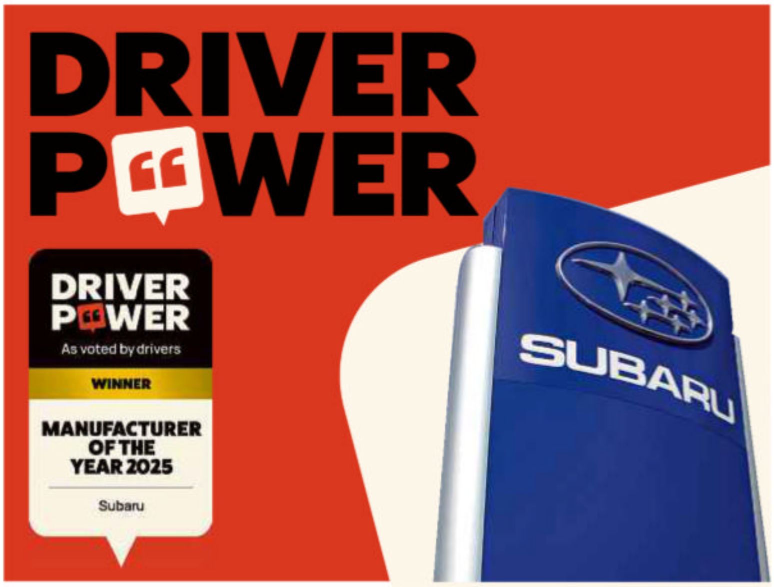
The X7 is expected to sit on a revised version of BMW's Cluster Architecture (CLAR) platform. This can cater for internal-combustion and pure-electric powertrains. While BMW hasn't suggested the new X7 will gain an EV variant, the firm has trademarked the 'iX7' nameplate.

Subaru is voted the UK's top car brand for the second year

Japanese maker defends its Driver Power title after readers name it the best in the business

Tom Jervis

Thomas.Jervis@autoexpress.co.uk



SUCCESS
Subaru finished in first place in seven of the 10 main categories in our annual survey of car companies

BRITISH motorists have spoken and Subaru has been confirmed as the best car brand of 2025, beating industry titans such as Tesla with top scores almost entirely across the board.

Subaru's victory in the 2025 Driver Power customer satisfaction survey comes after the brand topped last year's rankings. It dominated the 2025 survey, clinching first place in seven out of our 10 main categories: powertrain, exterior, interior, safety, practicality, ride and handling, running costs, quality, infotainment and value.

Subaru's UK managing director Lorraine Bishton said: "We're delighted that, for the second consecutive year, Subaru has been awarded best manufacturer in the highly respected Auto Express Driver Power customer satisfaction survey.

"We'd like to thank our customers for their ongoing loyalty to the brand, and also our retail partners, who continue to deliver a personalised service that supports Subaru's commitment to building safe, tough and fun vehicles that deliver on every journey."

Mercedes came second after missing out on the top spot by less than one percentage point. Buyers rated the manufacturer highly for the practicality, build quality and stunning interiors of its cars – all things that were highly commended on the Mercedes GLE, which topped our Driver Power model ranking this year.

Rounding off the podium places is Lexus, which has a long history of strong performances in the Driver Power survey. It got its best score in the quality and reliability category, while its interiors, infotainment and value for money also ranked highly.

Interestingly, last year's runner-up, Tesla, could only finish in 11th position in 2025, while the fourth-placed brand, Vauxhall, also impressed in the model survey, with the Astra and Grandland on the podium.

There was disappointment for Dacia, which came first in last year's model survey with the Duster SUV. Despite that car coming a respectable ninth in 2025, Dacia as a whole could only muster 27th in the brand survey.

Auto Express editor Paul Barker said: "Driver Power is an invaluable tool for those browsing the car market, giving them real insight not only about a particular car they're looking at, but also the brand they're potentially buying into.

"Now, following the launch of Auto Express's 'Find a Car' service, Driver Power is an even greater commodity. It highlights the views of real owners who live with the cars day in, day out, so you can buy with confidence."

LORRAINE BISHTON Subaru UK managing director

> **"WE'D LIKE TO THANK OUR CUSTOMERS FOR THEIR ONGOING LOYALTY TO THE BRAND, AND ALSO OUR RETAIL PARTNERS"**

SMMT's plan to lift the UK car industry

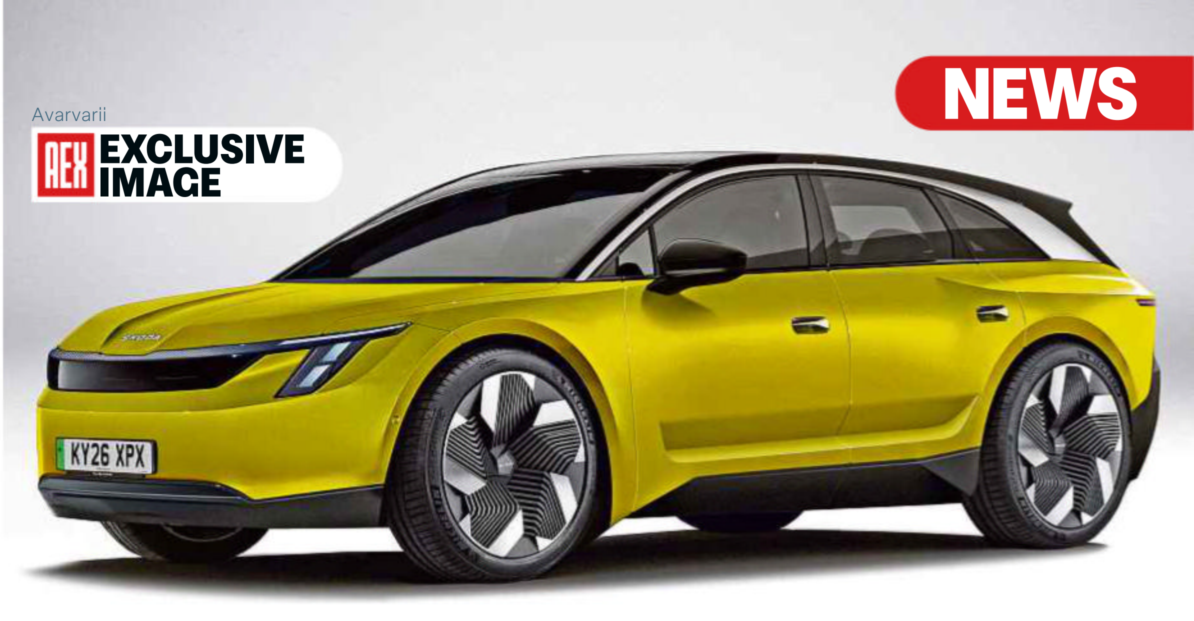
A NEW multi-pronged plan to revive the UK's floundering car industry could inject an extra £50billion into the economy over the next decade, coming alongside investment by the Government as part of its new Industrial Strategy.

At the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders' (SMMT's) annual International Automotive Summit, the UK car industry set out the details of its 'Competitive Edge' report. This outlines the key changes that need to be implemented in order to propel the nation to become one of the world's top 15 forces for automotive manufacturing.

Of the 10 main points highlighted, the most crucial involve reducing energy costs – which have recently been squeezing makers' profit margins as electricity prices soar while EV manufacture requires more power – driving consumer demand for electric vehicles, and securing investment from overseas.

In the report the SMMT again stated its wish for the Government to implement further changes and fiscal incentives beyond those outlined in the ZEV (Zero-emission Vehicle) mandate; industry leaders want the Government to slash VAT on the purchase of new electric cars for private buyers, as well as on public charging.

Auto Express asked if the introduction of any measures would be realistic at this stage in proceedings, given the lack of resources in the public purse – and SMMT chief executive Mike Hawes admitted that getting any of its wishes in this regard would be "rather optimistic".



Avarvarii

Octavia to go electric – but petrol lives on

Phil McNamara

Philip.McNamara@autoexpress.co.uk

SKODA'S pure-electric Octavia is shaping up for a 2027 debut, but the combustion-powered hatch and estate will live on to cover broad customer tastes.

The Czech car maker will show a concept previewing the upcoming zero-emissions Octavia in Germany this autumn and previewed in our exclusive image above. And Klaus Zellmer, Skoda's CEO, promises the design takes a radical step forward.

"I'm really looking forward to sharing our Octavia concept car: it will give a glimpse of our next-level design strategy. It's going to create a lot of buzz and controversial discussion," he told Auto Express.

"[The concept] is clearly recognisable as a Skoda, but it's a further step of our 'Modern Solid' design language that we've established with the Elroq."

The concept will have a sleek estate bodystyle and develop the building blocks of modern Skoda design. Those include the gloss-black 'Tech Deck' grille that houses driver-assistance system sensors.

The Munich show car will give a taste of the technologies and proportions of Volkswagen Group's all-new Scalable Systems Platform (SSP). This is designed to replace the MEB architecture beneath electric cars such as the VW ID.3 and Cupra Tavascan, and the premium PPE electric platform that underpins the Audi A6 e-tron and zero-emissions Porsche Macan.

Skoda introduced the current Mk4 Octavia in 2020 and expected it to be the last combustion version of its best-selling car. But slow demand for EVs has put plans for an electric-only model on ice.

"The [next] Octavia [was] originally planned for MEB," Zellmer explained. But the electric model has been delayed so that it can use SSP and unlock superior capabilities. Zellmer added: "We pushed that onto the next platform simply because we're convinced we will need autonomous drive possibilities, long range, fast charge and so on, which will come with the next generation."

Zellmer hinted that the Octavia will be one of the first electric Skodas to use an existing name. "If I can send a wish to the universe, we should [use] Octavia. It's so strong as a brand," he said.

Combustion-powered Octavias will continue even after the EV arrives

KLAUS KELLMER Skoda CEO

> "I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO SHARING OUR OCTAVIA CONCEPT CAR. IT'S GOING TO CREATE A LOT OF BUZZ"

EV will be getting a major revamp

Volkswagen ID.4 to be 'completely different' in 2026

VOLKSWAGEN'S range of all-electric ID-badged vehicles is going through a revolution with several new models being teased – but the firm hasn't forgotten its existing line-up, because the ID.4 is set to be thoroughly revamped.

In order for the SUV to stay competitive with the likes of the recently updated Hyundai Ioniq 5, Kia EV6 and Cupra Tavascan, a hefty update for the ID.4 will be revealed towards the end of 2026 before sales start in 2027, according to Stefan Voswinkel, head of product communications at Volkswagen.

He said: "Everything on the outside will be different; the swooping styling will be cleaner." And he added: "The interior will be completely different as well", also declaring "it will be even better than Audi inside, in terms of quality".

As we saw with the ID.2 concept, physical buttons will appear in the updated ID.4 after features such as the touch-sensitive sliders for the climate controls and audio were criticised in the current model.

The ID.4 is currently offered with 52kWh and 77kWh batteries, and either a single-motor rear-wheel-drive layout or dual-motor all-wheel-drive set-up. VW says we'll see new batteries and powertrains for the refreshed ID.4, but wouldn't give any capacities or power outputs.

Voswinkel said the total number of changes for the new ID.4 "will be like the change from Mk5 to Mk6 Golf". Those two models used the same body and underpinnings, but the later edition was referred to as a new generation by Volkswagen.

Buy tyres online with local fitting

Best online tyre retailer 2024
10th consecutive win from Auto Express

170,000+ reviews
Rated Excellent on Trustpilot

Tyre Guarantee
On all tyre brands

2,200+
UK fitting centres

Enter your reg number today to discover the **best tyres**, and **offers**, for **your car**.

blackcircles.com
click & fit® tyres

Scan to search for tyres

Rear light signature similar to EX90's

Wraps will come off Volvo's EX60 in January 2026

THE new Volvo EX60 will make its world debut early next year, the Swedish maker has confirmed.

The company will unveil its brand-new rival for the Audi Q6 e-tron, Porsche Macan Electric and the highly anticipated, next-generation BMW iX3 in January.

The announcement came at the same time as Volvo issued the first official teaser image of the all-electric alternative to its XC60, which reveals the new rear light signature for the EX60. As far as we can see, there's no full-width light bar, but there are separate segmented tail-lights embedded in the rear windscreen – just as you'll find on the EX90, EX30 and ES90.

The main tail-light unit is located lower down, behind the car's pronounced and surprisingly angular rear haunches, and features slim light elements with a tiny Volvo script at the side. In the same image, we can also see much bigger Volvo lettering across the tailgate and smooth surfacing, similar to that on the brand's other electric vehicles.

The EX60's overall proportions should be similar to the current XC60's, which the firm has just announced is the best-selling Volvo of all time – overtaking the 240 with 2.7 million examples built to date.

> "THE MAIN TAIL-LIGHT UNIT IS LOCATED BEHIND THE PRONOUNCED AND SURPRISINGLY ANGULAR REAR HAUNCHES"

STYLING
Qashqai was facelifted in 2024, bringing in a sharp new look for Nissan's big-selling family SUV

New tech ups hybrid Qashqai's economy

Alastair Crooks

Alastair.Crooks@autoexpress.co.uk

NISSAN has given its hugely popular Qashqai a boost with major improvements to the e-Power hybrid powertrain.

The set-up is different from other hybrid SUVs because it uses its petrol engine solely to generate energy for a lithium-ion battery, which in turn powers the electric motor that actually drives the front wheels. The idea is that the system delivers a more EV-like driving experience, but without needing to plug the car in to charge.

The updates to the e-Power set-up follow the Qashqai's facelift in 2024, which introduced a fresh design and new tech. According to Nissan, the engine is all-new. While it's the same size as before – a 1.5-litre turbocharged three-cylinder – it now has Nissan's new 'STARC combustion concept' to increase thermal efficiency to 42 per cent, a larger turbocharger that results in lower revs at cruising speeds, and more efficient lubricating oil to extend service intervals from 9,000 to 12,000 miles.

The result is that the Qashqai e-Power's 54mpg WLTP combined fuel economy has been boosted to 62mpg. CO2 emissions have fallen from 117g/km to 102g/km.

The set-up is more powerful too. Before, a 181bhp electric motor was fed by the petrol engine, but now it's rated at 202bhp, which should lower the 7.9-second 0-62mph time. The new system is also more refined, according to Nissan, with a drop of 5.6 decibels compared with the old system.

The new set-up is also said to be 20 per cent cheaper to make, so we hope the Qashqai e-Power's entry point won't increase from its current £30,615 price tag when it goes on sale in September.

However, there's no word yet on whether these new updates will translate to the larger Nissan X-Trail's slightly different all-wheel-drive e-4orce e-Power system.

> "WLTP COMBINED FUEL ECONOMY HAS BEEN BOOSTED FROM 54MPG TO 62MPG"

New Toyota Land Cruis

Company insists that its latest 48V mild-hybrid system hasn't compromised t

Ellis Hyde

Ellis.Hyde@autoexpress.co.uk

OFFICIAL
TOYOTA
2-GBU-249

HYBRID Hilux set-up is said to give a smoother drive on road and better ability in rough terrain

> **"THE MOTOR-GENERATOR HAS BEEN MOUNTED HIGH UP, SO THE 4X4 CAN STILL WADE THROUGH WATER UP TO 700MM DEEP"**

COMMERCIAL New version goes on sale in August. It can tow up to 3.5 tonnes and offers 2,000 litres of space

THE new Toyota Land Cruiser is getting a mild-hybrid system that the firm says is designed to deliver "smoother, more comfortable performance both on and off road".

Every new Land Cruiser sold in the UK will eventually have the set-up, which is also used in the Hilux Hybrid. It combines the 4x4's existing 2.8-litre turbodiesel engine with an electric motor-generator and a 48V lithium-ion battery, and can contribute an extra 16bhp and 65Nm of torque.

The main benefit is a quicker, quieter and smoother stop-start system, but the set-up is also said to give more consistent acceleration through the rev range to provide a more comfortable driving experience. Toyota even claims the hybrid system enhances the Land Cruiser's already immense ability to tackle obstacles off road and in rough terrain.

The motor-generator is used to recharge the hybrid system's battery, so drivers don't have to worry about finding a plug to top up. It's able to recuperate energy when the Land Cruiser is slowing down, with the regen function improving efficiency, Toyota says; it should also create more "natural-feeling deceleration".

To protect the electrified assistance from whatever Land Cruiser owners want to throw at their vehicle, the motor-generator has been mounted high up on the engine block, ensuring that the 4x4 can still wade through water up to 700mm deep. The battery has also been protected against water, while a filter helps prevent the build-up of dust in the cooling paths, and a fan is intended to maintain the unit's performance in high temperatures.

Because this new set-up is more compact and less complex than Toyota's 'self-charging' full-hybrid system, the brand can add the mild-hybrid set-up to cars' existing powertrains more easily, and without the need for significant modifications or re-engineering.

Toyota hasn't announced pricing for the new Land Cruiser Hybrid 48V, but it has said that the first examples will be arriving here early next year. However, we don't expect that they will cost much more than the outgoing, solely diesel-powered version, which already starts from £77,845 – £15,000 more than the rival Land Rover Defender 110.

At the same time as announcing the new hybrid powertrain, Toyota has also launched a new Land Cruiser Commercial. It's designed for buyers who need serious off-road abilities, but not the load-carrying or extra passenger space in the Hilux pick-up truck. The Land Cruiser Commercial offers up to 2,000 litres of cargo space, and can tow up to 3.5 tonnes.

Order books open on 1 August, with prices starting from £52,729 (ex.VAT).

ser adopts hybrid tech

the iconic 4x4's legendary off-road capabilities

AEX OFFICIAL

BESPOKE Sadair's Spear stands out from existing Jesko thanks to its new rear wing, front air dam, larger front splitter and side winglets

Koenigsegg saddles up new £3.8m limited-run hypercar

Alastair Crooks

Alastair.Crooks@autoexpress.co.uk

AEX KOENIGSEGG has unveiled the Sadair's Spear – a new hypercar that has the same underpinnings as the Jesko, but with new aerodynamics, less weight and even more power.

The Jesko is named after founder Christian von Koenigsegg's father, and Sadair's Spear is his horse, which he rode in his final race as a jockey in 1976.

The new car has some mechanical tweaks over other Jesko variants, but it's been altered cosmetically too. There's a new active top-mounted rear wing, an enlarged front splitter with independent underbody flaps, larger diffusers behind the wheels, a new front air dam and new side winglets.

The new variant also weighs 35kg less than the standard Jesko, thanks to lighter springs in the self-levelling suspension, less sound deadening and bespoke carbon-fibre seats. The result is a kerbweight of just 1,320kg – less than a Ford Focus. There's a six-point harness inside to give you the full race car environment – although Koenigsegg still fits a radio and even a wireless smartphone charger to keep things civilised in there.

Powering the Sadair's Spear is the same twin-turbocharged 5.0-litre V8 engine, with Koenigsegg providing its usual output figures for unleaded and more potent E85 fuel: 1,282bhp for the former and 1,603bhp for the latter, which is 25bhp up on the Jesko. There are no performance figures just yet; while the Jesko Absolut's theoretical top speed is 310mph, it does this without the huge wing of the Sadair's Spear.

To ensure Koenigsegg's latest hypercar stops as well as it goes, there are carbon-ceramic brakes front and rear with bespoke brake calipers.

Pricing for the Sadair's Spear stands at £3.8m, but all 30 examples that will be built are already spoken for.

FENOMENO

Trademark hints at future special from Lamborghini

A RECENT trademark application may have revealed the name of a new, limited-edition Lamborghini hypercar.

The model is called Fenomeno (Italian for 'phenomenon'), and it could be based on the brand's Revuelto flagship. The trademark application was made in April and also features a logo that's in keeping with the Revuelto's and Temerario's, showing little horns protruding out of the name – a nod to previous Lamborghinis named after Spanish fighting bulls.

The Revuelto's predecessor, the Aventador, formed the basis of several special editions, including the Sian, the new Countach and the Centenario. The Fenomeno could have a similar brief, using the same structure as the Revuelto, but gaining a new exterior and possibly new powertrains.

"HORNS PROTRUDING FROM THE NAME ARE A NOD TO LAMBORGHINIS NAMED AFTER SPANISH FIGHTING BULLS"

BYD partners with Octopus for 'all-inclusive' EV deal

BYD has teamed up with Octopus Energy to launch a new 'all-inclusive' EV bundle which uses vehicle-to-grid (V2G) tech to allow drivers to essentially charge their car for free.

The Power Pack Bundle enables users to lease a BYD Dolphin supermini (below) from £299 a month. But in what is claimed to be "world first", this includes a bi-directional Zaptec Pro charger and will charge your car for free.

It does this by draining the car's battery using V2G tech when you're plugged-in at home, selling it back to the grid at peak times. Then, at off-peak hours, it will feed energy back into the car.

The energy firm's CEO, Greg Jackson, said that to get the free electricity, customers will need to plug their car in around 20 times per month for 12 hours per go.

CASHING IN HAVE MOTO BECOME AN EASY TARGE

THE VAST MAJORITY OF AUTO EXPRESS READERS FEEL THAT MOTORISTS ARE BEING TREATED UNFAIRLY WHEN IT COMES TO ADDITIONAL ROAD TOLLS AND CHARGES

HIT AFTER HIT

Auto Express readers feel motorists are in the crosshairs of authorities when it comes to generating revenue

RISTS
T?

Tom Jervis

Thomas.Jervis@autoexpress.co.uk

MOTORISTS are being unfairly targeted by local authorities – that's the overwhelming opinion of Auto Express readers following a recent survey, which comes just as Oxfordshire County Council launches a consultation into plans for a new congestion-charge zone in Oxford.

The public consultation, which is set to run for six weeks, centres around a proposed C-charge zone – much like the one in London – that would be introduced in the autumn and see motorists have to pay a £5 daily charge to enter.

Local residents would be granted 100 free day passes per year, while those living in the wider Oxford area can apply for 25 free day passes annually. Permits for people such as care workers, Blue Badge holders and mobile traders mean they will also be able to avoid the charge.

Officials at Oxfordshire County Council say the main reason behind the proposed scheme is to reduce congestion, which is currently being caused by the closure of Botley Road, the main route into the city centre.

Oxfordshire councillor and portfolio holder for transport, Andrew Gant, said: “We believe the proposed temporary congestion charge could have a significant positive impact on people's travel in and around the city by strengthening local bus services and reducing overall traffic.”

But a council spokesperson did admit to Auto Express that while “there are significant uncertainties in the income forecast, net income after operating costs could total £3.5-4million per year”.

ANDREW GANT Oxfordshire councillor

> “WE BELIEVE THE PROPOSED TEMPORARY CONGESTION CHARGE COULD HAVE A SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE IMPACT ON PEOPLE'S TRAVEL IN AND AROUND OXFORD BY STRENGTHENING LOCAL BUS SERVICES AND REDUCING OVERALL TRAFFIC ”

The scheme is set to last just two years while redevelopment work at Oxford Station goes on – which has led to the closure of Botley Road and prevented any traffic-management solutions from being put in place. It is hoped that the C-charge, along with the city's existing Low Emissions Zone, will further improve air quality.

However, the council could not give Auto Express any guarantee that the congestion charge wouldn't continue after work on the station has finished.

Oxfordshire County Council has launched an online poll for residents to voice their views, and Gant urged them to “read through our proposal and tell us about how it might make a difference to them”. He added: “I'm keen to understand the impact of the scheme and also to see feedback on some of the details being outlined.”

The council's suggested scheme comes as a new Auto Express survey of more than 1,000 readers found that 85 per cent feel that the policies of central and local government – such as the Oxford proposal, plus an increase in the Dartford Crossing charge from September and plans to raise the London Congestion Charge in January 2026 – are unfairly singling out and targeting motorists.

Four out of five (81 per cent) of the 1,087 respondents believe that the proposed London Congestion Charge increase by Transport for London (TfL) to £18 per day is unfair. This higher fee is set to come into force next year and coincides with a removal of the exemption for EVs, meaning that even if you drive an electric car, you'll have to pay the daily rate – although EVs registered with the Auto Pay scheme will get a 25 per cent discount.

Interestingly, however, 38 per cent of those we surveyed are aligned with TfL's position and also feel EVs should be exempt from the charge, outweighing the 33 per cent who believe otherwise; 29 per cent of those asked had no opinion on the matter. On the other hand, 73 per cent believe London's Blackwall Tunnel should be toll-free, after a charge was introduced in April.

With new charges cropping up everywhere, it's no surprise that 47 per cent of motorists say they avoid using certain routes and driving in certain areas in order to avoid having to pay extra. In fact, 14 per cent say it makes them drive less altogether – one of the many reasons, officials openly state, why such schemes are introduced.

Tolls are also now beginning to affect buying decisions as well, with data from Auto Express' partner website, Carwow, showing that areas with a Low Emissions Zone (LEZ) see higher rates of enquiries for electric cars. For example, since an LEZ came into effect in Aberdeen last June, EV enquiries from the area tripled year-on-year between 2023 and 2024.

Carwow's head of user research, Sarah Blewett, said the car-buying site is seeing “clear correlation between the rollout of stricter Low Emission Zones and a meaningful shift in car-buying behaviour in the UK's most impacted cities”.

Not everybody is encouraged by this aggressive approach to changing driver habits, though. Speaking exclusively to Auto Express, the director of the Association of British Drivers, Ian Taylor, asked: “Why on earth should people be subject to so many restrictions on moving around their own living areas? Things like the Congestion Charge and Dart Charge are just money-making schemes, if anything.”

SARAH BLEWETT Carwow, user research

> “THERE'S CORRELATION BETWEEN THE ROLLOUT OF STRICTER LOW EMISSION ZONES AND A MEANINGFUL SHIFT IN CAR-BUYING BEHAVIOUR IN THE UK'S MOST IMPACTED CITIES ”

Taylor added: “Once upon a time, you'd be lucky to get across the country and not be mugged by highwaymen; nowadays, that's done by the authorities, and they've legalised it.”

IAN TAYLOR Association of British Drivers

> “ONCE UPON A TIME, YOU'D BE LUCKY TO GET ACROSS THE COUNTRY AND NOT BE MUGGED BY HIGHWAYMEN; NOWADAYS, THAT'S DONE BY THE AUTHORITIES, AND THEY'VE LEGALISED IT ”

AUTO EXPRESS

FIRST FOR DRIVES

26 **GENESIS G80 ELECTRIFIED**
New tech in stretched saloon

28 **BYD DOLPHIN SURF**
Big plans for brand's smallest EV

30 **MERCEDES G 580 EQ TECHNOLOGY**
Retro looks meet electric power

BMW 2 Ser

Tom Jervis
Thomas.Jervis@autoexpress.co.uk

FIRST UK DRIVE Updates to range-to
driver engagement, despite a drop in t

'INJECTION' is a word that conjures up unpleasant thoughts for many of us, so perhaps it's no surprise that BMW ditched the 'i' suffix (which stands for 'fuel injection') for this latest version of the hot 2 Series Gran Coupé.

The BMW M235 sits at the pinnacle of the 2 Series Gran Coupé line-up which, confusingly, is separate to that of the 2 Series Coupé; the former shares parts with the 1 Series hatchback while the latter has more in common with the bigger 3 Series, and a full-fat M2 model heads up that car's offerings with over 470bhp.

As with the outgoing M235i, this latest variant comes as standard with BMW's xDrive four-wheel drive system; this is mainly front-biased in this iteration, but can send as much as 50 per cent of the car's power to the rear wheels.

Speaking of the M235's predecessor, you may have noticed that power for this latest model has dropped from 302bhp on the 'i' to 296bhp here. Torque is also down from 450Nm to 400Nm.

This is all to comply with emissions regulations and while most buyers are unlikely to notice – even if they have driven the old car – it feels like a step back, especially after the facelifted Audi S3 recently benefitted from a roughly 20bhp power bump.

Styling is always subjective, and although the facelifted 2 Series has more of a whiff of Kia Ceed about its front end, to our eyes the nip-and-tuck for this mid-life update has served BMW's baby saloon

ESSENTIALS
BMW M235 xDrive

Price: £45,855 **On sale:** Now

Powertrain: 2.0-litre, four-cylinder turbo petrol

Power/torque: 296bhp/400Nm

Transmission: Seven-speed automatic, four-wheel drive

0-62mph: 4.9 seconds

Top speed: 155mph

Economy/CO2: 34.4-37.7mpg/173g/km

Size (L/W/H): 4,546/2,070/1,445mm

ON THE ROAD
BMW's chassis tweaks have made the new M235 a little more eager than the M235i it replaces, but drivers will find rivals such as the Audi S3 ultimately more entertaining

ries Gran Coupé

pper attempt to increase the engine's power output

"To our eyes, the update has served BMW's baby saloon well; the front end does a better job of hiding the high bonnet line"

well; the pinched front end now does a better job of concealing the car's high bonnet line. We even quite like this rendition of BMW's illuminated kidney grille.

Inside, the M235 now gets the brand's latest dual-screen infotainment system. Introduced as part of the 2 Series' mid-life update, the 10.25-inch centre touchscreen is the same as fitted to the larger BMW X1 and X2 SUVs, offering crisp and bright graphics and rapid responses to your inputs.

We like how you can configure widgets on the home screen to suit your preferences, although there are a few too many sub-menus. BMW has also committed the industry-wide crime of moving the climate controls from a neat stack above the gearlever to the bottom of the touchscreen. True, having them in a fixed position means they should be easy to find – especially after living with the car for a while – but it can be difficult to accurately adjust them on the move.

In comparison with the vibrant centre screen, the digital dials feel a little dark and dingy. They're not all that configurable and you can't display several items, such as the sat-nav and your media, at the same time. It's also a shame that there aren't any M-specific display configurations – although the shift lights that illuminate via the optional head-up display do make up for this somewhat.

On the theme of M-specific touches, our test car had the optional bucket seats that come as part of the £2,000 M Sport Pro pack. The seven-year-old inside us couldn't help but appreciate the illuminated ‘M’ logo on the headrest, which is one element of an array of ambient lighting throughout the cabin; the ‘M’ colours glimmer through pinholes in the dashboard trim and speakers, which helps reinforce the 235’s sporting character.

Interior space remains unchanged, meaning it’ll be sufficient for families with one or two younger children. Adults and taller teenagers sitting in the back may struggle with the M235’s sloping roofline which, along with a small set of rear windows, makes the second row feel a bit dark and dingy – the boxier BMW M135 hatch is better in this regard.

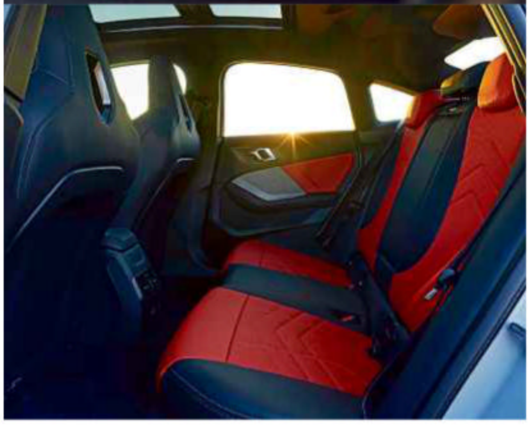
One often-overlooked feature we like about the M235’s S3 rival is that Audi offers it with tri-zone climate control; there no such option here, which is a shame because, while it’s not strictly necessary in a car of this size, it would help avoid complaints of “I’m too hot/cold” from kids in the back.

Unfortunately, unlike the larger 4 Series Gran Coupé, the 2 Series Gran Coupé isn’t a hatchback, meaning you’re stuck with a somewhat narrow opening for a boot that only offers 360 litres of space. The rear seats do split three ways, though, if you need to carry any larger or longer items.

Overall, though, the BMW’s interior has more of a sense of occasion than its main rivals – the Audi S3,

NOISES OFF
Engine isn’t as characterful or sweet-sounding as the six-cylinder unit used in other performance BMWs

Phone
Music
Maps
Messages
Now Playing
BMW
Podcasts
Audiobooks
SAT 1
Calendar
Settings
20°
20°



Mercedes-AMG A 35 and Volkswagen Golf R – while the build quality remains top class.

Conversely, we were rather disappointed with the old car's dynamics; it wasn't bad at all, but it didn't encourage you to drive it hard. Thankfully, the firm has made several chassis tweaks that are intended to give the M235 a driving experience more befitting a car wearing the M badge.

These changes include suspension upgrades, body stiffening and reworked anti-roll bars at the rear. The result? The M235 is marginally more eager than the outgoing model, with heavy-yet-precise steering, plenty of grip and a rear end that will occasionally be goaded into bouts of oversteer if you fling the car into a tight bend at speed.

Calm things down and on longer cruises the M235 is sedate enough to satisfy buyers looking for a potent family car that's practical for everyday use. We managed around 36mpg when cruising along A and B-roads, while the adaptive suspension does a good job of soaking up the biggest bumps when the car is in Comfort mode. On the other hand, in Sport setting, the M235 tends to tread the line between feeling sharp and unsettled.

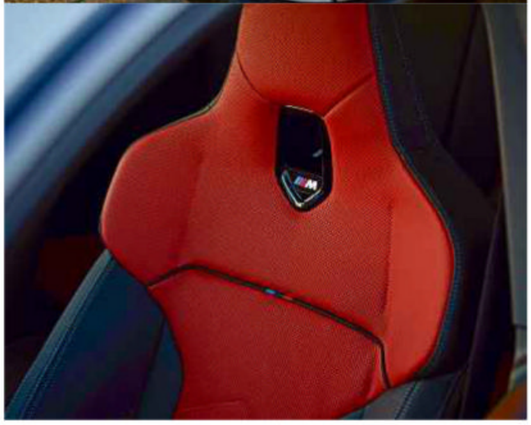
On top of that, the Beemer's 2.0-litre engine isn't the most characterful powertrain out there – it doesn't like to be revved out too much – but it does offer a more than satisfactory amount of shove, helped along by a new quick-shifting seven-speed automatic gearbox.

Accelerate hard to around 4,500rpm then lift off and you'll elicit some obviously artificial burbles from the exhaust; in Sport mode, it'll also let out a bark whenever you shift up, which adds to the drama somewhat.

But these flourishes don't make up for the engine's dull soundtrack, which lacks the depth and tone of the B58 six-cylinder unit that BMW offers on other performance models.

Ultimately, the M235 provides a modest improvement in terms of driving dynamics over its predecessor, despite being down on power. It doesn't, however, come close to the agile, playful nature of the M2 and M240i Coupés.

With this in mind, if you're after driving pleasure from your premium compact saloon, you'll be better served by the aforementioned Audi S3. This is slightly more expensive than the BMW, which is just over a grand more than the old car. However, the Audi now gets the torque-vectoring differential from the full-fat RS 3, furthering its performance credentials and capabilities.



EQUIPMENT
Four-wheel drive system is front-biased, but can send 50 per cent of power to rear; bucket seats are part of £2,000 M Sport Pro pack

"The interior has more of a sense of occasion than its main rivals, while the build quality remains top class"

VERDICT ★★★½☆

FOR this mid-life update, BMW has focused on making the M235 more engaging to drive, and despite the drop in power, it has succeeded to an extent. Beyond the standard 2 Series, most of the thrills here come from brisk acceleration, but the handling is competent rather than playful. Better looking than before and with a hi-tech interior, the hot 2 Series is more desirable than ever, but still can't match rivals (or other cars with the M badge) dynamically.

Genesis Ele

FIRST DRIVE Updates and fresh face for newly extended, EV-only

Richard Ingram

Richard.Ingram@autoexpress.co.uk

TAKING on the likes of the BMW 5 Series and Mercedes E-Class is no easy task, but Genesis has struck an impressive balance with its G80 – a car that, at least at first glance, has a lot of the key features needed to succeed in this sector.

Initially offered with petrol and diesel engines, the G80 was facelifted this year – and lengthened by 130mm – plus it's now only available in 'Electrified' guise. The powertrain has been beefed up with a bigger battery (94.5kWh gross) for a range of up to 354 miles; the firm hopes its single spec offers enough to tempt business users and chauffeur drivers away from their trusty executive saloons.

At the front, you'll immediately notice the huge grille, which subtly hides the (heated) charge port. Some of the trim, plus the headlights and bumpers, has been updated, and apparently everything from the B-pillar backwards is new – primarily to accommodate that longer wheelbase.

A lone 'Dynamic' trim replaces the old 'Luxury' model and is priced at a whisker under £76,000. That's up by around £6k versus the pre-facelift car, but the firm claims the added kit means that in real terms the difference is less than £1,500.

Every car gets 19-inch alloys, fully electric, heated and cooled leather seats, a brand-new 27-inch infotainment system and digital instrument cluster, plus a 17-speaker Bang & Olufsen stereo with Dolby Atmos, and three-zone climate control.

The Genesis is at its best when cruising on the motorway, thanks to the quiet electric powertrain, noise-cancelling tech, acoustic glass and road-reading adaptive suspension. Driving with a little more urgency doesn't really suit the G80, although it'd be unfair to suggest it was anything other than perfectly capable. Indeed, there's plenty of punch from the motors – even at 70mph-plus.

The steering is well weighted, and we love the paddle-activated regenerative braking system. There are four settings – the strongest of which offers one-pedal driving, and is perfect in town.

If comfort is key, the camera-controlled damping does a pretty decent job of smoothing out lumps in the road. One function we particularly like is the 'Chauffeur Mode', which softens the throttle and removes the initial sharpness in the brake pedal. It's designed to make the car more relaxing for those in the back, but it's a very likeable default for driving.

Our biggest complaint centres on the distracting driver-assistance systems. The lane-departure and speed-limit warning systems are annoyingly sensitive, and the attention monitor sounds all too often. You can turn these off, but the likes of BMW and Audi seem better able to integrate these systems without reducing their functionality.

Inside, that screen dominates the dash, and while some of the graphics aren't the most cutting edge, it's relatively easy to navigate and has wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto connectivity. Most of the equipment comes as standard, but you can

INTERIOR
Quality is good enough to attract BMW and Mercedes buyers; new 27-inch screen dominates G80's dashboard

ESSENTIALS

Genesis Electrified G80 Dynamic AWD

Price: £75,915 **On sale:** Now
Powertrain: 94.5kWh battery, 2x e-motors
Power/torque: 365bhp/700Nm
Transmission: Single-speed automatic, four-wheel drive
0-62/top speed: 5.1 seconds/139mph
Range: 354 miles
Max charging: 187kW (10-80% in 25 mins)
Size (L/W/H): 5,135/1,925/1,480mm

> **"The Chauffeur Mode softens the throttle and is a very likeable default for driving"**

ectrified G80

saloon as it sets sights on the executive and chauffeur markets

add things such as a Comfort Pack (£1,780) and Second Row Comfort Pack (£2,640), while Nappa leather upholstery is £2,620. White brake calipers – a pointless addition, given the stylish but fared-in alloy wheels – are £340, while an adaptor for the Vehicle to Load (V2L) system will set you back £300. The only other option is the excellent rear-wheel steering set-up – a snip at £1,120.

Quality inside is first rate, with every surface covered in luxurious material. We'd like a bit more adjustment in the seat – the big battery means you sit quite high – but we didn't find the driving position particularly uncomfortable.

However, as before, the G80 is a little short of rear-seat practicality, which is a shame given that it's targeted at the executive chauffeur-car market. Although there's loads of legroom, foot space under the front seats is limited and there's not enough headroom for taller adults.

The old, petrol-powered G80 had a reasonable 424-litre boot, and could fit a couple of large suitcases without much trouble. The Electrified G80, however, loses a big chunk of that due to the electric motor. At 334 litres, it's smaller than a Volkswagen Golf's, and the shape and step in the floor mean you can't push things to the very back.

On a warm day we saw a reasonable 3.4 mi/kWh, which should ensure a range of close to 300 miles in normal conditions. The standard-fit heat pump will help maintain efficiency in cold weather.

Based on an 800-volt electrical architecture, the G80 can charge at up to 187kW, taking the battery from 10-80 per cent in 25 minutes. A BMW i5 takes longer to charge its smaller battery to 80 per cent.

REFINEMENT

G80 is wonderfully peaceful inside, thanks to acoustic glass, noise-cancelling tech and quiet powertrain. Camera-controlled damping gives a decent ride, too

AEX VERDICT ★★★★☆

THE Genesis Electrified G80 is a car that immediately grabs your attention – doubly so in this facelifted guise. The exterior is suitably premium, while the interior highlights how committed the brand is to winning buyers from the likes of Mercedes and BMW. But you'd have hoped its extra length might have resulted in a more spacious rear cabin.

ON THE ROAD The Dolphin Surf is great in town and the ride is smooth, but we would like the steering, throttle mapping and braking system to be more refined

Alex Ingram

Alex.Ingram@autoexpress.co.uk

THIS is the BYD Dolphin Surf, the latest marine mammal-themed EV from the brand. It's the smallest BYD car to reach UK shores and its starting figure of £18,650 is a few hundred quid less than the base-spec petrol-powered Renault Clio.

BYD is pitching the Dolphin Surf at the B-segment, which has recently blossomed with a great range of capable and likeable small electric cars, including the Citroen e-C3, which costs from £22,095.

The £18,650 BYD's powertrain specs are fairly modest, with the 87bhp Active model offering an official 137-mile range courtesy of its 30kWh battery. That's enough for on-paper acceleration to match the e-C3: 0-62mph takes 11.1 seconds.

But to get specs that run the Citroen close, buyers will need to step up to the Boost. This has a 200-mile range, thanks to a 43.2kWh battery. It uses the same motor (which due to the heavier battery, dulls the performance slightly), and at £21,950, its price is similar to the entry-level e-C3's.

Here, we're driving the £23,950 Comfort model. This uses the Boost's 43.2kWh battery, but it powers a stronger 154bhp e-motor. This trims the 0-62mph time down to 9.1 seconds, but also knocks seven miles off the official range.

Inside, the Dolphin Surf really feels like cracking value for money. Kit levels are very generous, with rear parking sensors, a reversing camera, keyless entry and go, and adaptive cruise control on every trim. Boost adds electric front seats and 16-inch alloy wheels in place of the Active's 15-inch steel rims, while the Comfort has LED headlights, a 360-degree camera, and wireless phone charging.

All versions also get a 7.2-inch digital driver's display and a 10-inch rotating touchscreen. BYD has listened to feedback from reviews and existing owners to fix issues with the infotainment display, but there's still no physical button to defog the back window, and the on-screen key is buried in the climate menu – all the more of a hassle when the Dolphin Surf doesn't have a rear wiper.

The cabin is fairly smart, with a level of finish that feels on par with its European rivals. Storage is a little limited, though, and some testers noted that the front seats aren't the most supportive.

But interior space is excellent. Rear knee room beats the Renault 5 and Citroen, although the BYD can't quite match the latter's excellent headroom. There is only seating for two in the back, yet that means shoulder room is great. A 308-litre boot volume is fine, but the shape is a little awkward, due to intrusions and the angle of the opening.

For shorter urban trips, the Dolphin Surf has plenty to recommend it. The compact size makes it a doddle to drive around town, and the 9.9-metre turning circle is a bonus. The ride is smooth and overall refinement is good, while roadholding is merely fine, rather than fun.

Beyond those points, the Dolphin Surf's drive is decidedly unremarkable. The steering feels quite sensitive and almost completely lacking in any form

BYD D

FIRST UK DRIVE Chinese brand

PRACTICALITY
Despite its sub-four-metre size, the BYD matches superminis for passenger space and has a 308-litre boot

> “The compact size makes it a doddle to drive around town, and the 9.9-metre turning circle is a bonus”

Dolphin Surf

has big plans for its smallest EV against European supermini rivals

Pete Gibson

of self-centring at higher speeds. The powertrain gives lots of performance in the Comfort setting, but the throttle mapping is rather lazy – even in its most lively Sport mode, which can lead to wheelspin when pulling out at a junction.

Slowing down doesn’t have the slick coordination of some rivals, either. Lift off the throttle, and the motor regeneration starts to gently slow the car. But press the brake pedal for a little more stopping power, and the transfer from regen to pads doesn’t line up, resulting in a brief moment where the regen releases before the mechanical brakes kick in. It’s by no means alarming, but it’s obvious that some competitors’ systems are more finely tuned.

The powertrain is certainly efficient, though, and we averaged 5.6 miles/kWh on a wide range of roads in mid-20-degree Celsius temperatures. That said, motorway driving would dent that figure.

ESSENTIALS

BYD Dolphin Surf Comfort

Price: £23,950 **On sale:** Now
Powertrain: 43.2kWh battery, 1x e-motor
Power/torque: 254bhp/340Nm
Transmission: Single-speed auto, front-wheel drive
0-62/top speed: 9.1 seconds/93mph
Range: 193 miles
Max. charging: 85kW (30-80% in 22 minutes)
Size (L/W/H): 3,990/1,720/1,590mm

AEX VERDICT ★★★★☆

THE Dolphin Surf is the smallest and most affordable BYD in the UK, and in many ways, it’s the most convincing model in the range. It’s impressively spacious and comfortable for a small car, with strong kit levels and competitive pricing relative to the recent influx of new European rivals. If it wasn’t for the likes of the Citroen e-C3 and Renault 5, we’d be singing its praises even more, but they offer a more sophisticated drive and better functionality inside to keep the Dolphin Surf off the top of the class.

"Despite the electric G-Class's significant size, the retro design affects practicality"

465 MBC
G 580

ON THE ROAD
Mercedes has worked on giving the electric G-Class a similar feel to its lighter ICE siblings

Mercedes G 580 EQ

FIRST DRIVE Electric version of iconic German SUV is largely successful, but there are there are drawbacks

Alastair Crooks

Alastair.Crooks@autoexpress.co.uk

THE Mercedes G-Class is a true icon, and with unmistakable looks paired with real off-road ability, it's tallied up over half a million sales throughout its 45-year history. During that time the G-Class has transitioned into something of a fashion accessory for the rich and famous, but now we're welcoming the biggest change to the model yet, with the first all-electric version.

Having driven the G 580 with EQ Technology in the UK for a week or so, we noticed most people referred to it as the 'electric G-Class', which is what we'll do here. While the electric version might have an entirely different powertrain to the combustion-engined model, what it does share is astronomical pricing. A diesel G-Class will set you back just over £140,000, with the V8-powered G 63 coming in at just under £190,000. The EV splits the two, at £154,870, and comes in just one trim level: the G 580 with EQ-Technology AMG Line Premium Plus.

The electric G-Class shares its styling with its petrol and diesel counterparts. This is in keeping with Mercedes' statement of "G-Class first, EV later", so the characterful boxy proportions remain, along with lots of details that mark the retro-styled G-Class out from more contemporary luxury SUVs.

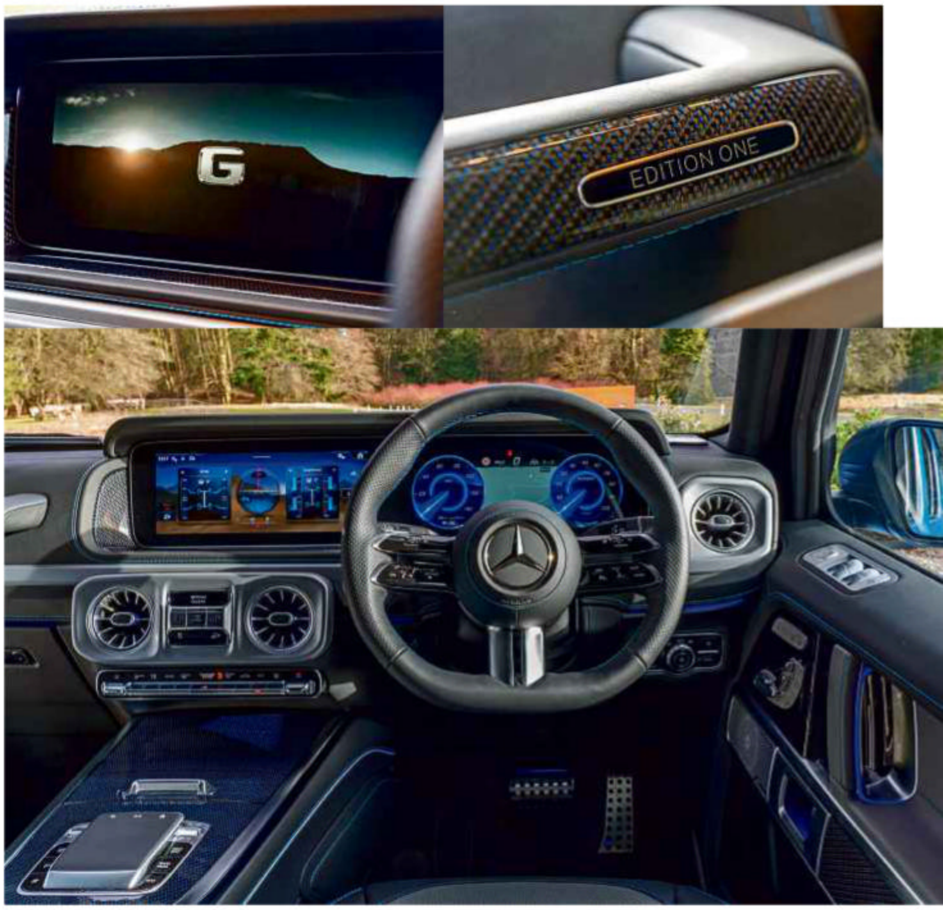
To improve the car's aerodynamic efficiency, Mercedes has tweaked the grille, along with the front bumper and air vents in the wheelarches, and raised the bonnet. All electric G-Classes get 20-inch wheels as standard and there's a squared-off rear shell for the charging cables, but you can specify a spare wheel case for a more traditional G-Class look, although this reduces rear visibility.

Even with those aerodynamic measures, the electric G-Class is not exactly efficient. Despite a colossal 116kWh battery, there's a maximum range of 280 miles (just 14 miles more than a Vauxhall Corsa Electric). Regularly tap into the full 579bhp and you'll struggle to see north of 200 miles.

Unless you're quite tall, you'll have to use the side steps to climb into the elevated cabin and once up there, you're met with a truly exceptional interior. While the electric G-Class might be at the upper end of Mercedes' model line-up, it uses a twin 12.3-inch screen layout on the dash, rather than the cinematic 'Hyperscreen' or new 'Superscreen' set-up with their much larger displays. Given the angular, more rugged design language of the G-Class, we think this is the correct decision and the MBUX infotainment itself remains a joy to use.

To make sure there's no mistaking you're in anything other than a G-Class, there's plenty of character from the upright windscreen, passenger grab-handle and prominent top-mounted indicators to the commanding driving position. While the swathes of carbon-fibre surfacing might not to be everyone's taste, there's no denying the G-Class is seriously well screwed-together inside. But some frustrating elements from other Mercedes models are present, such as the fiddly haptic buttons on the steering wheel and sometimes unresponsive mouse pad on the centre console.

Despite the electric G-Class's significant size, the retro design can affect practicality. The cabin feels cosier than you'd expect in the front and legroom is



Q Technology

INTERIOR
MBUX infotainment suits the electric G-Class's character, but the carbon-fibre trim won't be to all tastes. The cabin feels cosier than you'd expect for such a big car

ESSENTIALS

Mercedes G 580 with EQ Technology

Price: £154,870 **On sale:** Now
Powertrain: 116kWh battery, 4x electric motors
Power/torque: 579bhp/1,164Nm
Transmission: Single-speed automatic, four-wheel drive
0-62/top speed: 4.7 seconds/112mph
Range: 280 miles
Max. charging: 200kW 10-80% in 32 minutes
Size (L/W/H): 4,873/2,187/1,969mm

MERCEDES-BENZ
G
SCHÖCKL PROVED

tight in the rear. The boot capacity is quoted at 620 litres, 20 less than in the petrol and diesel versions, thanks to a higher floor. It's still big, though, and the side-hinged door helps make getting things in and out easy – as long as no one parks close behind you.

Mercedes has worked hard to give its EV a similar driving experience to its siblings. It weighs even more than the V8 model – 445kg heavier, at 3,085kg – but it doesn't feel any more lumbering and heavy than the combustion-engined cars. Quick inputs on the fairly vague steering will upset the car's balance, but body roll is kept in check to a respectable degree, and the EV doesn't baulk too much under hard braking and acceleration either.

The ride quality is good, thanks to bespoke coil springs and adaptive dampers tuned to control the extra weight – a Range Rover or even a BMW iX will filter out bumps and rough roads more successfully, however. Around town the electric G-Class feels its size and weight, with the occasional shudder over potholes and a not-insignificant 13.6-metre turning circle. It isn't intimidating, though, with that excellent view out making it easy to position the Mercedes on even tight urban roads.

VERDICT ★★★⯪☆

MERCEDES' attempt to make an all-electric G-Class has been largely successful. It has the presence, quality and performance on or off road to honour the legendary badge. But poor efficiency, average refinement levels and a high price tag make this a difficult SUV to recommend, especially when there isn't a burbling V8 under the bonnet.

Volvo EM90

FIRST DRIVE Volvo has entered the ultra-luxurious van market, but at the moment it's only the Chinese that will get to relax in its posh new EV

Thomas Geiger

HOW times change. Where once the idea of ultimate luxury in a car typically took the form of a saloon from one of a handful of European brands, elsewhere in the world a very different type of vehicle has come to prominence: the ultra-luxury van. Now Volvo, owned by Chinese automotive giant Geely, has decided to jump on the bandwagon, releasing its gargantuan EM90 to customers in the Far East.

This type of car was initially made popular in Japan, where the Toyota Alphard – and its distinguished brother, the Lexus LM – currently dominate the luxury-car class. In fact, Lexus recently brought its LM flagship to the UK, where it has outsold the former LS saloon tenfold since its debut. Yet it's the Chinese who are pushing the segment to a new level, with the Li Auto Mega and XPeng X9 capturing plenty of attention, even in Europe.

Unlike a Mercedes V-Class, for example, the EM90 is not based on a commercial vehicle, but has been designed from the ground up purely as a luxury car. As such, the Volvo doesn't come cheap, even in China, where prices start at around 818,000 RMB (the equivalent of around £84,350) – putting it on a level with cars such as the Mercedes EQS.

Volvo hasn't quite done all this work on its own, though, because the EM90 has been developed together with stablemate Zeekr. The upscale Chinese brand has provided a hi-tech platform, to which the Swedes have applied their own distinctive touch. The cabin, therefore, channels that unique ambience only the Scandinavians can manage" cool, sober and reserved, yet still warm-hearted, cosy and comfortable.

A monitor, which pops out from the roof behind the front seats, is big enough to offer a dramatic cinematic experience, without overwhelming passengers as they are by the 'Theatre Screen' in the latest BMW 7 Series. Bowers & Wilkins provides the sound and, of course, that dominates the EM90's infotainment system.

In the second row of seats you can experience all of this in two electric armchairs that have cooling, heating and massage functionality, complete with a folding table in the armrest for workaholics. Predictably, there's acres of room, but it's the third row where things are even more impressive; it's much better than in the new Volvo EX90, especially when you're trying to get in and out.

With all three rows in place, boot space amounts to 535 litres, which expands to a maximum of 2,376 litres with the rear seats folded and moved forward right up to the front armchairs. There's also a bonus 29-litre 'frunk' under the bonnet, which is just about large enough to store the charging cable.

Settle into the driver's seat and things start to feel more like a Volvo that you'll recognise, although the infotainment screen on the centre console is much bigger than you'll find in other models – and is mounted horizontally, instead of upright.

Although Google is still running in the background, the system has been developed by the Chinese and therefore has its own idiosyncrasies. It won't only show a typical navigation screen and instructions, but will also count the distance to an intersection metre by metre. The set-up will also recognise traffic light phases, accurate to the second.

The 268bhp electric motor on the rear axle has 343Nm of torque, helping push this colossal lounge on wheels along at a very healthy rate, with the real-world acceleration feeling faster than its 8.3-second 0-62mph time would suggest. Energy for the e-motor is provided by an 800V electrical architecture and a chunky 116kWh (109kWh usable) battery. On the Chinese testing cycle (CLTC), this is good for 434 miles, and in the stop-start traffic that's guaranteed in the country's mega cities, the economy could prove to be even better.

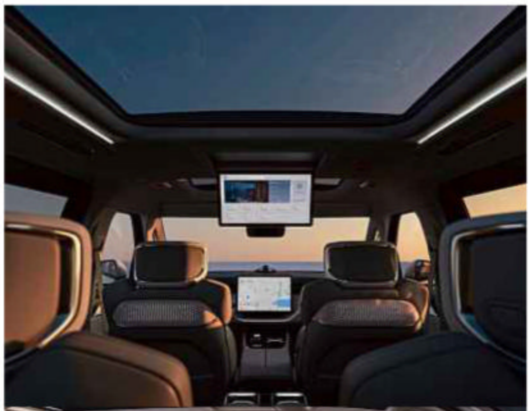
No matter whether you're driving, or lounging around in the back, the EM90 is like a sedative on wheels. Being extraordinarily comfortable is a given for this class of ultra-luxurious van, but the Volvo raises the stakes with elements that take it onto an even higher plane. Rather than some small hybrid powertrain whirring away under the bonnet, as you'll find in many of the posh Japanese-built vans, the EM90's electric system works in silence, with noise and vibration simply not an issue.

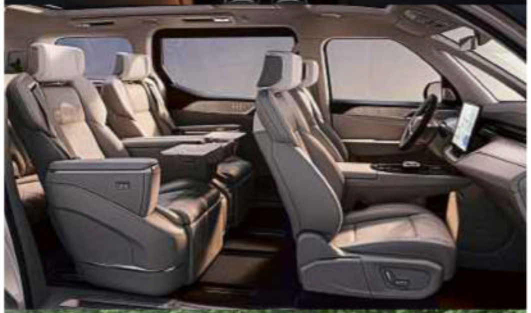
Yet what elevates the Volvo above many of its local competitors is that innate Swedish-ness that seems to have been translated effortlessly into the Chinese market. And while there are no firm plans to sell the EM90 in Europe, the closely related Zeekr 009 is available outside of China, suggesting that a landscape in which the ultimate Volvo is no longer an estate or SUV, but rather an ultra-luxurious van, could yet become a reality.

> **"No matter whether you're driving, or lounging around in the back, the EM90 is like a sedative on wheels"**

LONG STORY

At more than five metres in length, the Volvo EM90 offers plenty of space for passengers to sit back in style as they're wafted along in the EV silence, or while watching their favourite TV show or movie on the roof-mounted screen (right)





HI-TECH Google-based infotainment (left) features tech to accurately recognise traffic light phases or give you a metre-by-metre countdown to an intersection

ESSENTIALS
Volvo EM90

Price: 818,000 RMB (£84,350 est.)

On sale: China only

Powertrain: 109kWh battery, 1x e-motor

Power/torque: 268bhp/343Nm

Transmission: Single-speed automatic, rear-wheel drive

0-62/top speed: 8.3 seconds/112mph

Range: 434 miles (CLTC)

Max. charging: 360kW (10-80% <30 mins)

Size (L/W/H): 5,206/2,024/1,859 mm

AEX VERDICT ★★★★☆

THIS is a Volvo like no other, and yet is still characteristic of the brand. There are few modern cars as homely as the EM90, and none will deliver you to your destination in such a relaxed manner. For those who covet space, prestige and ultimate comfort, the EM90 proves an SUV doesn't have to be the default choice. It's just a shame that, for now, this most compelling of cars is unlikely to exude its calmness on European roads.

OUR BEST EVER CLASSIC CARS

We reveal our favourites, from British beauties to V8-engined beasts

> "THE SPIDER SHOULD BE KEPT FOR SPECIAL TRIPS WITH THE WIND IN YOUR HAIR AS YOU BASK IN THE SUN"

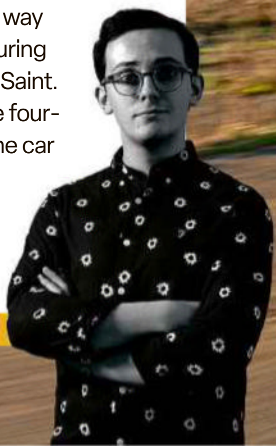
VOLVO P1800

Power/engine size: 100bhp/1.8 litre
Engine/gearbox: 4cyl/four-speed manual with overdrive
0-60/top speed: 11.0 secs/110mph **Price new/price now:** £1,500/£30,000

BOASTING a gorgeous body, the Volvo P1800 drove its way into the public's hearts with its sweeping lines, grand touring comfort and role as Roger Moore's ride of choice in The Saint.

Under the long bonnet lies a relatively modest 1.8-litre four-cylinder engine which, at first, produced just 100bhp. The car sat on the same chassis as the 122 Amazon, but several tweaks gave more of a grand touring feel, with buyers able to choose from coupé or shooting brake bodies.

TOM JERVIS



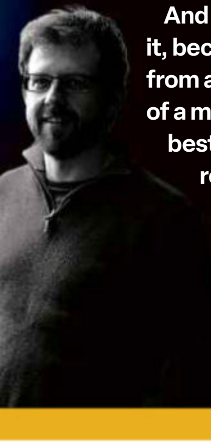
LANCIA AURELIA B24 SPIDER

Power/engine size: 118bhp/1.8 litre
Engine/gearbox: V6/four-speed manual
0-60/top speed: 11.5 seconds/115mph
Price new: £3,173
price now: from £750,000-£1m

I'VE had a model of the Lancia Aurelia for many years because it's quite a pretty thing. But it was only when I looked into the car's history and engineering that I discovered what an amazing classic it is.

It's the first production car with a V6 engine, which is a fairly important feat in itself. Plus it has a transaxle for better weight distribution and inboard rear brakes to cut unsprung weight, so there was sophistication behind its immaculate lines.

There was a convertible, but the most elegant version is the Spider, which should be reserved for special trips with the wind in your hair, as you bask in the sun while cruising along the French Riviera.



And you'll want to savour it, because pricing starts from at least three-quarters of a million, with the very best examples easily relieving you of a £1m. Sadly, with those kinds of figures, I'll have to stick with the model sitting on my desk.
MAX ADAMS

"THE GTI MIGHT SOUND SLUGGISH BY MODERN STANDARDS, BUT IT WAS A JOY IN THE BENDS"

VOLKSWAGEN GOLF GTI Mk1

Power/engine size: 108bhp/1.8 litre
Engine/gearbox: 4cyl/four-speed manual
0-62/top speed: 9.1 seconds/110mph
Price new/price now: £6,500/from £15,000

THE blueprint for hot hatches was well and truly laid down by the first Golf GTI. Firstly, it did all the practical stuff: it was roomy inside, easy to drive, comfortable and didn't cost a bomb to run – crucial to the car's appeal in the mid-seventies.

However, the engine also had enough shove to fire the GTI to 62mph in 9.1 seconds. That might sound sluggish by modern standards, but at only 840kg, the GTI was a joy in the bends - with help from a fettled chassis and lower ride height.
ALASTAIR CROOKS

MINI COOPER S

Power/engine size: 76bhp/1.3 litre
Engine/gearbox: 4cyl/four-speed manual
0-60/top speed: 10.5 seconds/97mph
Price new/price now: £778/up to £50,000

THE Mini was voted Auto Express's best British-built car of all time, and the Cooper S is the performance cherry on the top. Admittedly not in terms of outright performance; 76bhp and a 0-60mph time of over 10 seconds are figures shamed by almost any model on sale today – but this is the car that gave birth to the term go-kart-like handling. From The Italian Job movie, to Paddy Hopkirk's Monte Carlo rally success, the Cooper S was a hero of the sixties. And that continues now for anyone who's seen the humble hatchback chase brash American saloons around Goodwood at the Revival or Members Meeting! The Mini is one of Britain's most cherished icons, and the Cooper S is the most loved of all.
PAUL BARKER

JAGUAR E-TYPE

Power/engine size: 265bhp/3.8 litre **Engine/gearbox:** straight six/four-speed manual
0-60/top speed: 6.5 seconds/150mph **Price new/price now:** £2,098/from £50,000

IF there's one car that could earn its place in the history books with a single image, it's the Jaguar E-Type. Described by Enzo Ferrari as the most beautiful car ever made, the effortlessly glamorous sports car first graced us with its presence in 1961 and was an immediate sensation.

Yet it was not unattainable. At launch, the Series 1 E-Type cost from £2,098, which was half the price of a contemporary Ferrari or Aston Martin. The Jag was more powerful than the competition too, with its original 3.8-litre straight-six producing 265bhp and allowing it to reach 150mph flat out. **ELLIS HYDE**

AC COBRA 427 SC

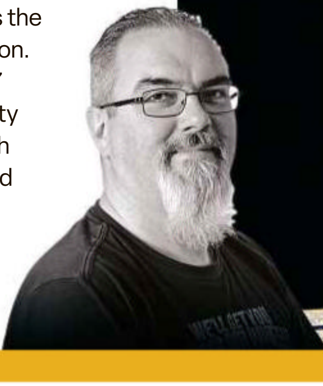
Power/engine size: 485bhp/7.0 litre
Engine/gearbox: V8/four-speed manual
0-62/top speed: 4.0 seconds/185mph
Price new/price now: £7,000/£1.2 million

> “PLENTY OF PEOPLE HAVE STUFFED V8s INTO EUROPEAN MACHINES TO DELIVER GREAT PERFORMANCE, BUT THE COBRA WAS THE MASTER OF THE CONCEPT"

THERE have been plenty of examples of people stuffing big V8s into European machines to deliver great performance, but it’s arguable that the AC Cobra was the grand master of the concept. In basic terms, the lightweight AC Ace was shipped from the UK to California, where Shelby American Inc. shoehorned a Ford V8 under the bonnet. The result was the Cobra – and a fearsome reputation.

Most fearsome of all is the 427 SC. The 427 is the engine capacity in good ol’ US cubic inches, which translates into 7.0 litres for us, and with 485bhp in a car that weighs less than a tonne, some pretty lively handling is on offer.

DEAN GIBSON



MERCEDES 300SL (W198)

Power/engine size: 215bhp/3.0 litre
Engine/gearbox: 6cyl/four-speed manual
0-62/top speed: 8.5 seconds/155mph
Price new/price now: £27,575/from £22,000

THE Mercedes 300SL (W198) is, in my eyes, one of the greatest and most beautiful cars ever made. Those iconic gullwing doors weren’t a gimmick; they were there because the spaceframe chassis underneath was lifted straight from the W194 race car that in 1952 won the sports car class of the 24 Hours of Le Mans.

Mechanically, it was way ahead of its time, but what seals it for me is how elegant it looks. The 300SL is fast, glamorous and completely timeless; everything else feels a bit ordinary next to it.

GEORGE ARMITAGE

ROVER P5B

Power/engine size: 160bhp/3.5 litre
Engine/gearbox: V8/four-speed manual or automatic
0-62/top speed: 10.7 seconds/110mph
Price new/price now: £2,000/£20,000

WITH seats that’d be at home in a manor house and a dash that looks like it’s straight out of a fighter plane, the Rover P5B is a pinnacle of the classic car world. This British bruiser has style, power and history, so it’d be a crime not to include it in this list.

While the standard Rover P5 is very desirable, the P5B takes it that step further. As well as its exquisite, more curvaceous styling, the B is powered by the renowned Rover V8. Along with a divine soundtrack, this 3.5-litre lump also churns out 160bhp, which results in a 0-60mph time of around 10.7 seconds. I’ll admit that this isn’t a lot by today’s standards, but this is very much a car for wafting around in complete style and sumptuous comfort.

SHANE WILKINSON

> “THIS IS A CAR FOR WAFTING AROUND IN COMPLETE STYLE AND SUMPTUOUS COMFORT"

LAMBORGHINI COUNTACH LP400

Power/engine size: 300bhp/2.5 litre
Engine/gearbox: 5cyl in-line turbo/six-speed manual
0-62/top speed: 5.9 seconds/163mph
Price new/price now: £27,575/from £22,000

THE Countach was built in 1974, but its design is even older; the first Countach show car dropped jaws in Geneva three years earlier. And just imagine that. On roads occupied by models such as the Ford Cortina, Morris Marina or even 'premium' German cars like the BMW 2002, the Countach must have seemed as if it came directly from outer space.

Yet it wasn't just the car's design that was astonishing, but also its incredible 3.9-litre V12 powerplant and mid-engined layout. Yes, the world had already been given an indication of the now ubiquitous mid-engined layout for supercars by the Miura, but that car's classical features and rounded haunches – beautiful though they were – gave way to something far more experimental in the original LP400 Countach.

JORDAN KATSIANIS

> "ON SEVENTIES ROADS, THE COUNTACH MUST HAVE SEEMED AS IF IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE"

PORSCHE 911

Power/engine size: 165bhp/2.4 litre
Engine/gearbox: 6cyl/five-speed manual
0-62/top speed: 7.9 seconds/136mph
Price new/price now: £3,970/from £60,000

THE Porsche 911 has been the sports-car benchmark for over six decades. And while the shape has barely changed since the original, those early cars, to my eyes, look the cleanest. The sleek, tear-drop shape, compact proportions, round headlights and Fuchs-style wheels are utterly iconic.

Yet the 911's silhouette pales in comparison with how it drives. That rear-engined, rear-wheel-drive chassis, the sweet steering, its precise manual gearbox – nothing comes close if you want to feel that pure, unadulterated connection between the tyres and the tarmac.

RICHARD INGRAM

AUTO EXPRESS

SELL WITH THE EXPERTS

WHY IT PAYS TO SELL WITH AUTO EXPRESS

1

SELL WITH TRUST

With decades of testing all manner of motors, we know what a fair valuation looks like.

2

SAVE TIME AND MONEY

No hidden fees or bogus deals, just a straightforward road to selling.

3

GET AN HONEST PRICE

We'll get your car in front of our trusted network of dealers – readyto offer you their best price.

Ready to sell? Just search for 'Auto Express sell my car'

BRITAIN'S BEST NEW CARS 2025

We reveal 27 brilliant award winners, 91 great buys and one Car of the Year

AEX THE 2025 Auto Express New Car Awards are upon us, and we're struggling to remember a year that proved to be so tough at the top. It's a reflection of just how well so many car manufacturers – both new and old – are managing to embrace fresh technology, while still delivering a range of products that suits everyone.

There's plenty to love in 2025, regardless of your preferred fuel. Petrol-powered favourites have been updated, while electrification has enhanced some of our more aspirational categories. A total of 12 of our 27 category winners are available with fully electric powertrains, and some of those cars have petrol or hybrid options, too. Two-thirds of our category winners are available with a petrol or diesel engine.

And we've made it easy for you to find a deal on our favourites, with QR codes alongside each of our picks to take you straight to the latest deals on Auto Express's marketplace, where you can buy new, lease, or shop for something second-hand.

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER

YJ74 STA
HT25 CLX
HY25 AZB
K174 PPU
SKODA
BK25 HWD
FIAT
RX25 GDF

CITY CAR OF THE YEAR

KIA PICANTO

IN 2025, the Kia Picanto reminded us all at Auto Express exactly why we love small cars so much. Kia's smallest model received a shot in the arm for this year, gaining a range of improvements that not only made it even more funky to look at, but also saw it benefit from the sort of tech that only a few years ago would have been out of reach on even some family cars.

It didn't take long behind the wheel for us to be certain that there's far more to appreciate than the funky, fresh robot look brought about by the new LED lights and updated face. This 3.6-metre bundle of enthusiasm shows us all just how nippy and easy city cars can be to drive. Is it the fastest vehicle we drove all year? Of course not, but rarely did we feel like we needed more than the 77bhp offered up by the smooth and revvy 1.2-litre petrol engine. Especially when the benefit of such little mass to move around made it incredibly reluctant to use any petrol, too.

But alongside all of that fun, above all else, it's the Picanto's ability to feel so grown up on the open road that led it to victory. Refinement and ride comfort are great for such a small car, which means you could quite happily cover longer distances in the Kia without feeling worn out at the end of the journey.

All models benefit from an eight-inch touchscreen and a digital driver's display, while cruise control, rear parking sensors and a reversing camera are standard, too. Here's a car that could be the perfect downsizing candidate without any drawbacks.

> "Above all else, it's the Picanto's ability to feel so grown up on the open road that led it to victory"

OUR CHOICE

KIA PICANTO

1.2 Shadow (£17,045)

THE larger 1.2-litre petrol engine gives the Kia Picanto greater flexibility than the 1.0-litre unit, which is why we'd pair it with the well equipped Shadow trim. It comes with the sort of equipment that would have been exclusive to luxury cars only a few years ago; LED headlights, wireless smartphone charging, a heated steering wheel and a digital driver's display are all fitted as standard.

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER
CITY CAR OF THE YEAR
Kia Picanto

BUY THROUGH AUTO EXPRESS!
Scan the codes to view great deals on our winning and commended cars

COMMENDED

HYUNDAI i10

LAST year's city-car winner has narrowly been overthrown by its funky Korean stablemate for 2025, but there's still a huge amount to love about this down-to-earth entry point to Hyundai's talented line-up. It's slightly more pricey than the Kia, but otherwise it's just as easy yet grown up to drive.

LEAPMOTOR T03

THERE are few places where EVs make more sense than in cities. With the tech growing more affordable, there are some intriguing electric city slickers hitting the market, and the Leapmotor T03 is our favourite. The brand's first pint-sized EV impresses with its space, refinement and standard kit for just £15,595.

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
COMMENDED

COMMENDED

CITROEN C3

OUR 2024 Supermini of the Year, and outgoing overall 2024 Car of the Year, has been relegated by its Panda sibling, but the C3 is still a cracking little car. Groundbreaking for what you get for the money, in both petrol and particularly electric form, the C3 is spacious for the class, comfy and easy to drive.

RENAULT 5

MAKING sure retro is as cool as ever, the new Renault 5 has made a huge splash. Instantly recognisable as an R5, yet modern and fun to drive, the French hatchback has a sound, sensible foundation beneath it, thanks to its strong pricing and, with the larger battery fitted, an official range of 249 miles.

SUPERMINI OF THE YEAR

FIAT GRANDE PANDA

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER
SUPERMINI OF THE YEAR
Fiat Grande Panda

WHEN we first drove the new Grande Panda, we declared Fiat had played a blinder with a car that's both affordable and loaded with character – just like the original.

Available as a petrol hybrid or an electric car, the Grande Panda is a worthy bearer of an iconic name that has been around since 1980 in various forms. On the outside the Grande Panda uses that heritage intelligently from a styling perspective, but still has enough clever fresh touches to be very much the modern supermini.

The cabin is proof that an inexpensive car doesn't have to feel cheap. Although it's not loaded with plush soft-touch materials – this is a car kicking off from around £19,000 in hybrid form and £21,000 for the EV, after all – the interior is stylish and clever, and has as much character as the Italian supermini's chunky exterior.

Front seat and boot space are both great for such a small car – although we'll gloss over the rear-seat room – and the Grande Panda is great to drive in its natural urban environment, where the cosseting low-speed ride defies the short wheelbase. And you're looking at an official figure of 52.3mpg for the 99bhp 1.2 hybrid, or a 199-mile range for the 111bhp electric model.

The Grande Panda is everything a great little car should be. It's practical, sensible, comfortable, cheeky, fun, well priced and proof that Fiat still knows how to make a great small car.

> “The Grande Panda is everything a great little car should be. It's practical, sensible, comfortable, cheeky, fun and well priced”

OUR CHOICE

FIAT GRANDE PANDA

La Prima BEV (£23,975)

GIVEN that it's an urban runaround, we've plumped for the electric version of the Grande Panda, although the hybrid is almost as recommendable, and cheaper. LaPrima spec is worth the extra cost if you can afford it, although the entry Red, which is £3,000 less, retains the car's charm, just with less equipment.

BUY THROUGH AUTO EXPRESS!

Scan the codes to view great deals on our winning and commended cars

COMMENDED

CITROEN C4

CITROEN'S C4 is a very different proposition to the Octavia but it has similar virtues: bountiful space that belies its compact dimensions, keen prices and supreme comfort thanks to the French brand's trick suspension. Buyers can pick from fuel-sipping mild-hybrid or all-electric power.

DACIA JOGGER

GOT a big family? Dacia's Jogger is the cheapest seven-seater on the market, with prices starting a whisker beneath £19,000. That gets you a utilitarian but huge estate car with a choice of 108bhp petrol or 138bhp hybrid powertrains, officially good for up to 57mpg.

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
COMMENDED

FAMILY CAR OF THE YEAR

SKODA OCTAVIA

AEX WHAT makes a great family car? Value, space, efficiency and choice – and the Skoda Octavia absolutely nails that brief. Available with petrol and diesel power, or as the sporty 261bhp vRS, the generously sized hatchback and estate offers something for everyone.

Few rivals can match the Octavia's sheer space and usability. The hatch's 600-litre boot – expandable to 1,555 litres – outclasses competitors', while the roomy rear seats match even mid-sized SUVs for legroom. Skoda's signature 'Simply Clever' features, such as integrated umbrellas, rear-seat USB-C ports (five in total!) and hidden storage solutions ensure family life on the move is organised and effortless.

To drive, the Octavia's standout quality is its supple suspension, which delivers plenty of comfort. The updated engine range ditches plug-in hybrid power, but includes a smooth 1.5-litre petrol (also available as an efficiency-boosting mild hybrid) and an ultra-efficient 2.0-litre diesel, with plenty of low-down torque to get you sailing along.

Last year's facelift brings higher-quality materials and a tech-focused cabin. Every model has a 13-inch touchscreen with wireless phone connectivity and charging, heated front seats, front and rear parking sensors, plus keyless go.

And that's not forgetting the five-star Euro NCAP crash-test rating and a suite of safety features. Combining comfort, space, efficiency and thoughtful design, the Skoda Octavia remains the benchmark in its class – making it a thoroughly deserving winner of our 2025 Family Car of the Year award.

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER
FAMILY CAR OF THE YEAR
Skoda Octavia

BUY THROUGH AUTO EXPRESS!
Scan the codes to view great deals on our winning and commended cars

OUR CHOICE

SKODA OCTAVIA

1.5 TSI SE Technology (£27,845)

THE entry-level Octavia has all the kit you need, down to its digital driver's display and durable but classy 'Loft' cloth interior. The £27k base car gets a 114bhp petrol engine and a six-speed manual, or go for the punchy 148bhp diesel with its DSG transmission while you still can.

> "Combining comfort, space, efficiency and thoughtful design, the Skoda Octavia remains the benchmark in its class"

ESTATE CAR OF THE YEAR

SKODA SUPERB ESTATE

SOMETIMES it's the most obvious answer for a reason. Skoda's Superb has retained its Estate Car of the Year title, because it's a quite frankly brilliant estate car.

A boot big enough to camp in has an official maximum 690 litres of space with the rear seats up, rising to 1,920 litres with them dropped if you need to do a massive tip run.

But rear-seat space isn't sacrificed, with room for basketball players to sit comfortably one behind the other. The cabin is well laid out, too, with clever controls and nice materials.

In something of a rarity for modern cars, you can have your Superb Estate in petrol, diesel or plug-in hybrid form, with Skoda still seeing enough demand to make it worth offering a diesel in what is an excellent long-distance companion. Depending on spec, there are 148bhp or 190bhp 2.0-litre diesels – the latter being all-wheel drive – or 148bhp 1.5 and 2.0-litre 201bhp petrol alternatives, as well as the range-topping 261bhp four-wheel-drive model.

If efficiency is important, the plug-in hybrid blends a petrol engine and an electric powertrain. It has an official 84-mile EV range, which means some serious journeys can be covered on electric power alone, without waking the petrol engine.

And being a Skoda, it's got 'Simply Clever' touches that make your life easier scattered throughout the car. It really is superb.

> “In something of a rarity for modern cars, you can have your Superb Estate in petrol, diesel or plug-in hybrid form”

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER
ESTATE CAR OF THE YEAR
Skoda Superb

BUY THROUGH AUTO EXPRESS!
Scan the codes to view great deals on our winning and commended cars

OUR CHOICE

SKODA SUPERB ESTATE

1.5 TSI e-TEC SE Technology (£36,120)

IN line with the sensible workhorse nature of the Skoda, the entry car is a fine choice. Equipment levels are really impressive and while the 1.5 isn't overpowered for such a chunk of a car, it still does a fine job. However, the 201bhp 2.0-litre petrol – not available in SE Technology trim – is a better choice if you want a bit more poke.

COMMENDED

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
COMMENDED

TOYOTA COROLLA TOURING SPORTS

SENSIBLE and practical are two words that describe the idea of an estate car, and they also perfectly suit the Corolla Touring Sports. The estate version of Toyota's family car has almost 600 litres of boot space with the rear seats in place, and a choice of two super-efficient hybrid powertrains.

VOLKSWAGEN PASSAT

A LONG-time staple of the UK car market, the Passat was back with a bang in 2024 with an all-new model, available only as an estate and with petrol or PHEV power. Closely related to our 2025 estate champ, the classy VW wagon has a boot of up to 690 litres, making it even more of a load-lugger than previous Passats.

SMALL COMPANY CAR OF THE YEAR

KIA EV3

OUR CHOICE

KIA EV3

Air 81.4kWh (£36,005)

THE entry-level Air has pretty much all the kit you need; the one option we'd recommend is the £3k upgrade to the bigger battery. That creates the EV3 with the biggest range – 375 miles. It also lets you add £625 metallic paint without busting the £40k luxury-tax surcharge barrier.

KIA has hit a hot streak with its electric cars. The flagship EV9 won our Large Company Car title in 2024 and its striking design has now shrunk down to VW Golf-size to create the EV3. The result is another winner, thanks to its mix of long-range electric efficiency, thoughtful practicality and good running costs.

The base 58kWh model (£33,005) can do 270 miles, but spend £3k more for the 81kWh battery and you'll add 100 miles. It also gets 127.5kW DC charging for a 10 to 80 per cent top-up in 30 minutes. We've averaged 3.3mi/ kWh in winter and 4.6 mi/ kWh in warm weather.

Kia's EV is easy to drive, with great visibility, nicely weighted steering and snappy throttle responses. It also has a broad spread of braking modes, to harvest energy. Motorway noise could be better, though.

Inside, the EV3 packs decent tech even at entry level: dual 12.3-inch displays, adaptive cruise control, heated seats, nav, plus front and rear parking sensors are standard. Boot space is best-in-class and the car's width gives an airy feel with lots of shoulder room, even if the back seats are better for kids than adults.

Running costs are critical for company cars, and like all EVs, the EV3 qualifies for Benefit-in-Kind tax at just three per cent of the car's value. It depreciates as well as its VW and Cupra rivals and is covered by Kia's seven-year warranty. It all adds up to another winning Kia.

> "The EV3 is another winner, thanks to its mix of long-range electric efficiency, thoughtful practicality and good running costs"

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER
SMALL COMPANY CAR OF THE YEAR
Kia EV3

BUY THROUGH AUTO EXPRESS!
Scan the codes to view great deals on our winning and commended cars

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
COMMENDED

COMMENDED

HYUNDAI KONA

THE futuristic-looking Kona, last year's class leader, gets nudged into silver-medal position. There's a Kona for everyone, with a choice of petrol, hybrid and electric drivetrains, plus it offers plenty of space and a comfortable, refined drive.

MG4

THE budget choice is the MG4 EV. With rear-wheel drive, responsive steering and a comfortable suspension, it's the most fun to drive of our contenders. The styling and fiddly touchscreen won't suit all, but the powertrain choice is broad and the biggest battery will do 329 miles.

MID-SIZE COMPANY CAR OF THE YEAR

TESLA MODEL 3

AEX IF stats matter above all else – and if you're choosing a company car, they're likely to play a big part in your decision – then the Tesla Model 3 is a car to choose with your head. Taking all emotion out of the equation sees the Model 3 take the Mid-size Company Car category for the second year running, still leaving its closest rivals reeling from the series of mid-life changes that saw it take control of this category in 2024.

Pick almost any metric – whether it be performance, range or charging speeds – and the Model 3 comes out at the top of its class, or at least incredibly close to it. Tesla even sought to move some of these specs further away from its rivals; a subtly reprofiled nose improved aerodynamic efficiency, allowing the Long Range Rear-Wheel Drive variant to cover a WLTP-certified 436 miles between charges. And those charges will be quick too, because the Model 3 can charge at up to 250kW, and Tesla's Superchargers are still the UK's easiest and most effective charging network.

However, it's some of the more subjective changes that explain just why we rate this facelifted model so highly. Thanks to a focus on refinement, the inclusion of uprated suspension bushings, extra soundproofing and even acoustic glass make this updated car significantly quieter than early Model 3s – and as a result, even better on the sort of motorway journeys that many of these cars will spend much of their time doing.

Finally, thanks to competitive list prices, Benefit-in-Kind tax figures are very cheap, too, so running costs are cheap all round. Stack all those figures up, and it makes for a very compelling proposition.

OUR CHOICE

TESLA MODEL 3
Long Range Rear-Wheel Drive (£44,990)

FOR company car drivers, the Long Range Rear-Wheel Drive model is the one to have. There are more potent models higher up the range, but its performance is still excellent, while the official 436-mile range means that it'll go further on a single charge than any other Model 3, too.

> Pick almost any metric – whether it be performance, range or charging speeds – and the Model 3 comes out at the top of its class

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER
MID-SIZE COMPANY CAR OF THE YEAR
Tesla Model 3

BUY THROUGH AUTO EXPRESS!
Scan the codes to view great deals on our winning and commended cars

COMMENDED

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
COMMENDED

BMW i4

COMPANY car buyers could do much worse than choose our first commended option in this category. In some ways, the BMW i4 even has our overall winner beaten; it's better to drive with superior ride and handling, and it feels like a more expensive product. If badge appeal matters more than pure numbers, then the i4 is still well worth a look.

MERCEDES C 300 e

FOR those hunting competitive BiK costs without making the step to a full EV, the Mercedes C 300 e is a company car driver's dream. A 71-mile electric-only range combines with the practicality of a 2.0-litre petrol engine to allow rapid refuelling on longer trips. All of this comes in one of the most convincing Mercedes models currently on sale; its quality, refinement and comfort all impress.

LARGE COMPANY CAR OF THE YEAR

AUDI A6 e-tron

OUR CHOICE

AUDI A6 e-tron

Performance (£69,940)

IN a class where range really matters, we'd aim for the Performance model. Officially, it'll cover up to 464 miles between charges, which is impressive considering that it's no slouch either. Power from its single rear motor stands at 375bhp – enough for a 5.4-second 0-62mph time.

OUR Large Company Car of the Year category has completely transformed since 2024. With so much new talent joining the class, there's never been a better time to scoop low Benefit-in-Kind rates aboard a model that can easily shrug off hundreds of motorway miles.

Of those newcomers, it's the Audi A6 e-tron that takes the prize. The brand's latest EV tech first appeared on the Q6 e-tron, but it's the SUV's sleeker range mate – and as the most aerodynamically efficient production car Audi has ever sold, it's certainly sleek – where the Premium Platform Electric architecture is shown in its best light.

When we sampled it in its hottest S6 Avant form, we announced our verdict by saying: "Trust Audi to save its best work for a rapid estate car." But so many of the qualities which shone through on that range-topper are also present throughout the range, with a sumptuous ride, composed and responsive handling, and accurate steering filtering down to every version of the A6 e-tron.

And less potent models are even more efficient, too. We achieved a real-world range of more than 300 miles in the S6 e-tron Avant, while the more aerodynamic, more efficient base Sportback trims can go even further on a single charge. Round it all off with a tech-filled interior that's as smart as we've come to expect from Audi – at a price that undercuts its closest rivals – and it's sure to draw many envious glances in the office car park.

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER
LARGE COMPANY CAR OF THE YEAR
Audi A6 e-tron

> "A sumptuous ride, composed and responsive handling, and accurate steering filter down to every A6 e-tron"

BUY THROUGH AUTO EXPRESS!
Scan the codes to view great deals on our winning and commended cars

COMMENDED

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
COMMENDED

BMW i5

IN some areas, the BMW i5 is a match for our winner in the Large Company Car category. Its cabin and tech are first-rate, and the ride comfort is also on a par with the Audi's. Interior space, handling and performance all stand out, but when it comes to range and value, it just falls short of what our winner offers.

VOLKSWAGEN ID.7

VOLKSWAGEN'S ID.7 is the best EV that VW has made to date. It offers large company car size for mid-size money; it's priced against the Tesla Model 3, but at almost five metres long, it's very spacious and practical inside. Comfort and efficiency are top notch, and a new estate variant for 2025 only adds to its appeal.

SMALL SUV OF THE YEAR

RENAULT 4

IS there a more exciting brand than Renault right now? If there is, we're wracking our brains to think of a mainstream manufacturer whose current line-up blends desirability, tech and value so well.

For its smaller EVs, Renault has tapped into its rich back catalogue and revived some of its most distinctive past masters. It got off to an absolute flier with the Renault 5, and as this victory in our Small SUV class shows, it's been at it again with the R4.

Much like its original namesake, the 4 is less overtly about style – although that unmistakable illuminated fascia and distinctive profile still make the 4 stand out like little else in the class – but practicality is at its heart. Despite being larger than the 5 on which it's based, it's still a small car – just 4.1 metres long and 1.8 metres wide – yet there's loads of space inside.

It's the same story at the back, where a 420-litre boot is very impressive for the segment. Access to the load area is easy, too, because Renault engineers strived to make the hatchback opening as low as possible – a nod to the original 4's deep door.

But there's more to the 4 than that, because we found plenty of substance elsewhere, too. It's great to drive, with a great balance between comfort, handling and performance, while it's efficient in the real world, too. Most of all, however, the 4 delivers superb value compared with the competition. Where else can you get this much style, space and class-leading infotainment from less than £27,000?

> “Where else can you get this much style, space and class-leading infotainment from less than £27,000?”

OUR CHOICE

RENAULT 4

R4 Techno (£28,995)

ALL three Renault 4 trim levels use the same powertrain, so the choice here comes down to standard kit. We'd take the mid-spec Techno, because among its many extras over the entry-level Evolution are adaptive cruise control, paddles to adjust the regenerative braking, and the superb built-in Google-based navigation system.

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER
SMALL SUV OF THE YEAR
Renault 4

BUY THROUGH AUTO EXPRESS!
Scan the codes to view great deals on our winning and commended cars

COMMENDED

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
COMMENDED

ALFA ROMEO JUNIOR

ALFA Romeo is a brand with petrol coursing through its veins, but on the basis of the Junior, there's more than a spark of electricity in there, too. The Junior is the most convincing of the many compact Stellantis SUVs on sale; it's the best to drive and is keenly priced, despite wearing a desirable Alfa badge.

DACIA DUSTER

IN terms of car for the cash, the Dacia Duster sits right towards the top of the pile, but there's much more than just value on its side. The rugged good looks inside and out, a spacious cabin and comfort all won us over. Take the pure-petrol option for maximum bargain potential.

OUR CHOICE

SKODA ELROQ
SE L 60 (£33,360)

FOR most buyers, the SE L 60 will be all the car they'll ever need. An official range of up to 266 miles will cover off even longer journeys, while standard sat-nav, all-round parking sensors, plus a heated steering wheel and front seats, mean that it's generously kitted out, too.

MID-SIZE SUV OF THE YEAR
SKODA ELROQ

SKODA
KY74 PPU
85

SKODA has become a byword for dependable family transport over the years, and while the Enyaq moved things emphatically into the electric era, the follow-up, the Elroq, is even better. It sits below the Enyaq in the brand's family SUV range – a perfect fit for our Mid-size SUV category – but diving into just how and why it sits below the Enyaq made us realise what a fantastic prospect the Elroq would turn out to be.

In short, the Elroq gets all the perks of its big brother in terms of cabin quality, interior space and road manners, but sacrifices 115 litres of boot space, down to a still reasonable 470 litres. And what's the price of that compromise? Well, like for like, the Elroq is almost £6,000 cheaper than the Enyaq. And given that the Enyaq is already competitively priced against the competition, that shows what a bargain the Elroq is.

Prices for this roomy, comfortable and smartly finished SUV start from just over £31,000, making this a staggering amount of car for the cash. That gets you a fairly modest 52kWh battery, but bigger units are available; the 59kWh pack adds a useful 30 miles of range, to a total of 266 miles, while the 85 powertrain is capable of as much as 355 miles on a charge. There's even a slightly bonkers hot vRS model, complete with lurid 'Hyper Green' paint and a 5.4-second 0-62mph time. There really is something for all the family.

> "Prices for this roomy, comfortable and smartly finished family SUV start from just over £31,000, making this a staggering amount of car for the cash"

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER
MID-SIZE SUV OF THE YEAR
Skoda Elroq

BUY THROUGH AUTO EXPRESS!
Scan the codes to view great deals on our winning and commended cars

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
COMMENDED

COMMENDED

DACIA BIGSTER

DACIA'S Bigster does exactly what it says on the tin. It really is big for the cash; prices start at just over £25,000 for a spacious, comfortable five-seat SUV with a boot capacity of up to 677 litres, depending on the powertrain. The options include pure petrol with front or four-wheel drive, and a hybrid that is impressively frugal in everyday driving.

TESLA MODEL Y

THE Tesla Model Y EV was updated for 2025, becoming better than ever. Refinements to the powertrain boosted its already impressive efficiency, but it was the changes to the chassis, which have vastly improved refinement and ride comfort, that please us most. As ever, Tesla's Supercharger network is unbeatable, too.

OUR CHOICE

SKODA KODIAQ
1.5 TSI iV SE 5 seats (£42,045)

WE'D recommend sticking to the five-seat Kodiaq if you don't need the extra chairs. It also means you can get the plug-in hybrid system with its 75-mile range, even on the entry-level SE.

LARGE SUV OF THE YEAR
SKODA KODIAQ

THE last-generation Skoda Kodiaq was a quadruple winner of the Large SUV of the Year award, with its domination only punctuated by its SEAT Tarraco sister model. The second-generation Kodiaq already looks like a worthy successor, because it's backed up last year's victory with another in 2025.

Since the Mk2 Kodiaq's launch last year we've had the hot new vRS model join the line-up, along with a plug-in hybrid, with both versions expanding the Skoda flagship SUV's desirability even more.

It's the basics the Kodiaq does so well. Being a Skoda, it's keenly priced, with the entry-level petrol five-seater costing just over £38,000. There is a suite of excellent powertrains to choose from – the 1.5-litre mild-hybrid and 2.0-litre diesels are frugal, and the plug-in hybrid will give you 75 miles of electric-only range. The vRS model even gets the same 261bhp turbocharged four-cylinder engine as the Volkswagen Golf GTI.

Another thing Skodas are known for is interior space and there's none better than the Kodiaq. There's a huge 845-litre boot in the five-seater, shrinking to a still usable 340 litres in the seven-seater. We also prefer the Kodiaq's cabin to many of its VW Group siblings, with Skoda's 'Smart Dials' making things like climate and audio control easier to use on the move.

The Czech model is also a refined and comfortable place to rack up the miles – especially if you go for the smaller wheels. Throw in an extensive kit list and, of course, Skoda's 'Simply Clever' additions, and the Kodiaq is a worthy winner of this award.

> "Throw in an extensive kit list and, of course, Skoda's 'Simply Clever' additions, and the Kodiaq is a worthy winner of this award"

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER
LARGE SUV OF THE YEAR
Skoda Kodiaq

BUY THROUGH AUTO EXPRESS!
Scan the codes to view great deals on our winning and commended cars

COMMENDED

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
COMMENDED

HYUNDAI SANTA FE

STARTING at more than £50,000, Hyundai's range-topping petrol SUV is expensive, but we think it'll sell well on its head-turning looks alone. It has real presence, thanks to being longer and wider than a Kodiaq, which in turn means acres of passenger space, helped by a flat floor and a sliding middle row. While seven seats come as standard, there's a six-seat option with captain's chairs in row two.

VOLKSWAGEN TAYRON

THE seven-seat Tayron essentially replaces VW's Tiguan Allspace. Unlike the Kodiaq with which the Tayron shares its platform, there's no petrol or diesel five-seater; the PHEV model is your only five-seat option. The Tayron has five litres of extra boot space over the Skoda, and is very similar to the impressive Passat Estate to drive, especially with the optional Dynamic Chassis Control system fitted.

SMALL PREMIUM SUV OF THE YEAR

VOLVO EX30

PREMIUM in name, but not in price. The Volvo EX30 comes with the prestige connotations of the cool, stylish Swedish brand, but does so at a price that undercuts many of its mainstream rivals. And just because its cheaper doesn't means that it's lacking in specs, either – quite the opposite, in fact.

The range kicks off with a Single Motor model that's capable of 0-62mph in just 5.7 seconds, while the most potent Twin Motor Performance achieves the benchmark sprint in a scarcely believable 3.6 seconds. Our favourite is the line-up's mid-spec model, though; the Extended Range is only a little bit quicker than the base model, but thanks to its 64kWh (usable) battery, it will cover 296 miles (WLTP) between charges – or still comfortably more than 220 miles in our hands with plenty of motorway mileage factored in. Thanks to the Volvo's 153kW charging capability, you won't have to wait long to get back on the road, either.

Of course, all of this would be irrelevant if the EX30 didn't stack up well elsewhere, but the Swedish car is a true all-rounder. In our most recent comparison test, the EX30 scored brilliantly, with its comfortable driving experience (which doesn't come at the expense of sure-footed handling), performance and interior finish all earning plenty of praise. Of course, being a Volvo, it's packed with loads of standard safety kit, and Euro NCAP ranked it one of the safest models in its class. When it comes to big poshness on a small budget, little else even comes close to the EX30.

> **“Of course, being a Volvo, it's packed with loads of standard safety kit, and Euro NCAP ranked it one of the very safest in its class”**

VOLVO
OV25 NMM

OUR CHOICE

VOLVO EX30

EX30 Core Single Motor Extended Range (£37,260)

ALL versions of the EX30 feel suitably plush inside, so we'd happily get along with the entry-level Core. But we'd jump one up from the base powertrain and get the Single Motor Extended Range – it delivers up to an impressive 296 miles between charges on the WLTP cycle.

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER
SMALL PREMIUM SUV OF THE YEAR
Volvo EX30

BUY THROUGH AUTO EXPRESS!
Scan the codes to view great deals on our winning and commended cars

COMMENDED

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
COMMENDED

BMW X1

IT'S no surprise that the BMW Group has locked out both commended spots here, because the X1 and the MINI Countryman are closely related. The X1's more understated design hides a capable chassis, and with a range of superb petrol, diesel, PHEV and fully electric options; nothing else in the segment offers so much choice.

MINI COUNTRYMAN

THE MINI Countryman was last year's Small Premium SUV champ, and despite improvements to the EX30's line-up, the MINI is still very much worthy of a commended spot. Spacious, fun to drive and with a cabin offering a sense of occasion that nothing else in the class can match, it's big on personality and ability.

MID-SIZE PREMIUM SUV OF THE YEAR

BMW X3

THE fourth-generation BMW X3 had an awful lot to live up to at its launch. Its predecessor was a car that consistently performed strongly from the bottom to the top of its range, and it had the talent to see off pretty much any premium SUV challenger that crossed its path.

But as you'll have guessed by the top spot it's just received in this year's New Car Awards, the current X3 has not only matched its predecessor, but has also moved the game on in a few key areas.

It's under the bonnet where BMW now clearly leads the class, pretty much across the board. Petrol models have been boosted by an excellent new mild-hybrid set-up, whose 17bhp motor seamlessly shifts this striking SUV away from a standstill – it's now almost as smooth as an EV to drive around town.

Yet for real EV range, there's a superb new plug-in hybrid. Once again, its the electrical side that has turned the old xDrive30e from an also-ran into a PHEV class leader. The big 181bhp motor – 74bhp up on its predecessor – combined with a 54-mile EV range means that most drivers will rarely need to call the 2.0-litre petrol engine into action.

For those in more of a hurry, there's the excellent M50 xDrive – a 392bhp high-power SUV that blends refinement with superb performance. And those are qualities, to varying extents, that help every X3 model stand out from the crowd. Coupled with class-leading tech, superb interior and boot space, keen handling and a composed ride, they make finding flaws a very tricky business, which is why there's no more deserving winner of our Mid-size Premium SUV prize.

OUR CHOICE

BMW X3

X3 xDrive 30e M Sport (£60,140)

THE 30e's mix of petrol and electric power offers the sort of performance that buyers demand in this class, yet its electric range of up to 54 miles and low official 69g/km CO_2 figures make it a great choice as a company car for those who still want the flexibility of an internal-combustion engine.

> Thanks to class-leading tech, superb interior and boot space, keen handling and a composed ride, finding flaws can be a very tricky business

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER
MID-SIZE PREMIUM SUV OF THE YEAR
BMW X3

BUY THROUGH AUTO EXPRESS!
Scan the codes to view great deals on our winning and commended cars

COMMENDED

LEXUS NX

OUR serial winner of the Mid-Size Premium SUV prize has finally been knocked off the top spot in 2025. The Lexus NX's blend of smooth and frugal hybrid power – both in full-hybrid and PHEV forms – along with its sumptuous cabin finish, space and refinement, means that it still ranks among the best examples of the breed.

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
COMMENDED

PORSCHE MACAN ELECTRIC

THE Porsche Macan has turned electric in its all-new iteration, yet it maintains so many of the qualities that helped us to love its petrol predecessor. Flawless cabin quality, strong performance from its powertrains and a capable ride and handling balance all help it stand out among its fellow SUVs.

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
COMMENDED

COMMENDED

PORSCHE CAYENNE

IF there's one car that could convince keen drivers that large SUVs have a place in the world, or on their driveway, it's the Porsche Cayenne. As well as delivering astonishing handling, it's refined on the motorway and comfortable too. There's also the cavernous boot and a very spacious cabin, which is well finished and packed with technology.

RANGE ROVER SPORT

THE Range Rover Sport majors on ride quality, comfort and refinement, as a premium SUV should, but as the name implies, it's not lacking dynamism. The strong engine line-up includes plug-in hybrids capable of nearly 80 miles of pure-electric driving, and a staggeringly powerful and capable SV performance model.

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER
LARGE PREMIUM SUV OF THE YEAR
BMW iX

BUY THROUGH AUTO EXPRESS!
Scan the codes to view great deals on our winning and commended cars

LARGE PREMIUM SUV OF THE YEAR

BMW iX

WE'VE been massively impressed by the BMW iX since this big SUV, and its galactic-sized grille, arrived in 2021. We've previously named it our Large Company Car of the Year, primarily because of the supreme levels of refinement and long range it delivers, plus the minimal Benefit-in-Kind tax bill.

All of that is still true. However, following some substantial technological upgrades and a few light design tweaks, BMW's flagship electric SUV has become even better, allowing it to triumph over competition from Mercedes, Audi, Porsche and Range Rover, and take home silverware in a new category.

One highlight of the iX has always been its stunning interior. It wasn't overhauled or remodelled as part of the recent facelift, but it didn't need to be. The clean, contemporary design is complemented by high-quality materials everywhere, huge amounts of space, and a slick infotainment set-up that still incorporates BMW's faithful iDrive rotary controller. Sadly, this dial isn't long for this world, so enjoy it while you can.

BMW now offers a choice of 94.8kWh and 109.1kWh batteries, which along with several other upgrades under the metal, means the iX can deliver up to 426 miles of range. Meanwhile, the new M70 performance model delivers enormous power and remarkably good handling for such a big (and heavy) car, yet is still comfortable when you want it to be.

> "BMW's flagship electric SUV has become even better, so it can triumph over the competition and take home the silverware in a new category"

OUR CHOICE

BMW iX
xDrive45 M Sport (£78,405)

THE xDrive60 edition might have the longest range on paper, but the entry-level xDrive45 can still cover 374 miles non-stop and costs nearly £15,000 less. It also drives incredibly well of course, and the interior doesn't feel any less special. It's all you could want.

LUXURY CAR OF THE YEAR

BENTLEY FLYING SPUR

THE Bentley Flying Spur is our luxury-car champ, because it has a desirable combination of a brutish design and an eloquent interior, now joined by a fabulous brand-new engine. While it's never difficult to love a Bentley that looks like the Flying Spur, a recent combination of small but very impactful changes has created a package that has pipped the still-excellent BMW 7 Series to the top spot.

Bentley's plug-in hybrid powertrain pairs a twin-turbo 4.0-litre V8 petrol engine with an electric motor mounted inside the existing eight-speed dual-clutch transmission. This replaces the W12 engine, but has no obvious downsides, even if you have a penchant for big engines. That's because even with the hybrid moniker and its 30-odd miles of all-electric range, the V8 is more charismatic than the W12 ever was. It's also exceptionally fast and gives the Flying Spur a level of effortlessness you'd expect of a 5.2m-long Bentley.

But beyond more power and better efficiency, the hybrid system also fixes some of the non-hybrid version's key issues when considered as a luxury vehicle. The electric motor helps smooth out the gearbox's low-speed operations, and fills in the gaps in torque at the lower end of the rev range before the turbos have a chance to spin up. This model even rides better, thanks to new dual-valve dampers, and the digital displays inside are upgraded. These changes have made significant improvements all round.

> “Even with the hybrid moniker and its 30-odd miles of electric range, the V8 is more charismatic than the W12 ever was”

OUR CHOICE

BENTLEY FLYING SPUR

4.0 V8 Hybrid (£175,100)

BENTLEY only offers the new Flying Spur with its brilliant V8 plug-in hybrid powertrain, but it is available in a couple of tunes and trim lines. There's no bad option, but while the Speed's 771bhp is a colossal amount of power to revel in, we think the 671bhp base car or Azure model will do just fine. In terms of spec, Bentley's vast range of personalisation options mean you could channel St Tropez glamour at one end, or Gotham City sinister at the other, and both will work.

AUTO EXPRESS NEW CAR AWARDS 2025 COMMENDED

COMMENDED

BMW 7 SERIES

LAST year's winner hasn't lost any of its lustre. In fact, the BMW 7 Series' garish design seems to have softened with time, but its core talents of combining exceptional refinement, top-tier tech and a range of fully electric and plug-in hybrid power is as compelling as ever. But currently, Bentley has an edge that the brilliant 7 Series can't overcome.

RANGE ROVER

ONCE again, the Range Rover picks up a commendation, taking pure luxury into a terrain that no other can go, literally. Buyers can spec diesel, petrol, plug-in hybrid and, soon, EV versions, with a slightly refreshed and simplified interior. It can't quite pip the BMW and Bentley, but it offers a package that no other brand can get near to, especially if it's muddy.

AUTO EXPRESS NEW CAR AWARDS 2025

WINNER
LUXURY CAR OF THE YEAR

Bentley Flying Spur

BUY THROUGH AUTO EXPRESS!

Scan the codes to view great deals on our winning and commended cars

HOT HATCH OF THE YEAR

HONDA CIVIC TYPE R

YOU'D be forgiven for thinking we'd made a simple decision in giving the Civic Type R this award two years in a row. But the reality is quite different, because it's had to overcome two hard-charging rivals that could have very easily taken the top spot. Yet it's a testament to the world-class engineering that Honda has instilled into the Civic Type R that it's retained its crown – and it will be for the last time, because Honda has chosen to take it off sale in the next few months.

So what's this magic that's soon to be taken away? Essentially, the Honda Civic Type R is engineered with all the precision and detail that Porsche would give to a 911 GT3. The difference is that instead of a sports car, it's channelled into a practical, family-sized hatchback with a four-cylinder petrol engine and a six-speed manual transmission.

The Honda's chassis is almost perfect in its balance between capability and engagement, offering colossal grip at the same time as integrating the driver into the process in a way few other modern cars are capable of doing. The engine is effective, if not especially musical, but its responses are perfect, and the manual gearbox is on par with the best in the world. The Type R looks purposeful and aggressive, without seeming too over the top, and the perfectly executed interior is just the cherry on the cake. If this turns out to be the last petrol-powered hot hatch to win this category, it's one hell of a sign off. Bravo, Honda.

OUR CHOICE

HONDA CIVIC TYPE R (£51,905)

THE choice is simple: buy whichever Civic Type R you can! Honda's decision to take the car off sale this year has led to a spike in popularity, so the firm won't be taking any new orders.

COMMENDED

ALPINE A290

THE Alpine A290 proves how close we are to an all-electric hot hatch winning this award. The firm's take on the Renault 5 adds critical upgrades, such as wider tracks, bigger wheels, more power and a finely tuned suspension to create what may be the first genuinely engaging EV. But it's not quite there yet – especially in a world where the Civic Type R still exists. A Porsche Taycan is brilliant to drive, but it's no GT3. The same principle applies here.

AUDI RS 3

THIS year has seen Audi give the RS 3 a nip and tuck, with a subtly redesigned exterior, a fresh steering wheel and a few tasty new options. While these are all worthwhile, the reason the RS 3 nearly took the top spot is the chassis refinements that make the model far more engaging and entertaining then it's ever been. They, together with its charismatic five-cylinder engine, mean this is still a unique entry in the hot-hatch class.

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
COMMENDED

AUTO EXPRESS

NEW CAR AWARDS 2025

WINNER

HOT HATCH OF THE YEAR

Honda Civic Type R

BUY THROUGH AUTO EXPRESS!

Scan the codes to view great deals on our winning and commended cars

COUPE OF THE YEAR

BMW 2 SERIES COUPE

IT'S understandable that much of BMW's range has moved with the times, because high demand for SUVs from buyers plus lower appetite for smaller, sportier models has seen the brand drift away from its previous mantra of "the ultimate driving machine" to instead offer ever more comfortable and refined – yet still engaging – models instead.

However, if you're a BMW fan who yearns for a modern take on its previous icons, then our Coupé of the Year is just the car for you. The 2 Series feels more like an old-school BMW. Its overall footprint is similar to that of an E90 3 Series from 20 years ago and its simple front-engined, rear-wheel-drive layout makes even the base four-cylinder models feel engaging to drive. Of course there's also the four-wheel-drive M240i, which delivers superb all-weather traction, plus the lure of a lusty six-cylinder engine.

At the top of the range, however, is the M2. This superb bruiser of a car remains one of the best modern performance cars from BMW's M division, blending muscle-car brutality with scalpel-like precision. While most buyers go for the slick automatic, it's at its best with a six-speed manual gearbox. This transmission delivers one of BMW's highest-quality shifts, and trades some point-to-point pace for a heap more driver involvement.

An update for this year has seen its power output grow by 20bhp to 473bhp, while as with the rest of the 2 Series family, it's gained a smarter infotainment system, revised trims and more standard kit, all of which sealed its victory as our Coupé category winner.

> If you're a BMW fan who yearns for a modern take on its previous icons, then our Coupé of the Year is just the car for you

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER
COUPE OF THE YEAR
BMW 2 Series

BUY THROUGH AUTO EXPRESS!
Scan the codes to view great deals on our winning and commended cars

OUR CHOICE

BMW 2 SERIES COUPE

230i (£43,405)

UNUSUALLY, it's the least popular model in the 2 Series line-up that is the sweet spot. The 230i's 242bhp four-cylinder turbo engine is 61bhp up on the base 220i – which is enough for a keen driver to appreciate a noticeable bump in performance for the cash. If money is no object, the latest M2 is superb, though.

COMMENDED

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
COMMENDED

FORD MUSTANG

COUPE buyers love a two-door with a big personality, and the Ford Mustang has a bigger personality than most – by which we mean its fantastic 5.0-litre V8 engine. While its noise will have you coming back for more, it's the fact that the car is also spacious, sharp to drive, comfortable and surprisingly frugal that earns it a commended spot for 2025.

MASERATI GRANTURISMO

OUR 2024 winner in the Coupé of the Year category is still a fabulous two-door option. In fact, if we were asked to pick a car to drive down to the south of France in a day, we would find it hard to think of a better answer than the Maserati GranTurismo. This superb Italian GT offers comfort, refinement and performance in spades, which makes it worthy of its place in our top three this year.

CONVERTIBLE OF THE YEAR

MAZDA MX-5

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
COMMENDED

COMMENDED

MINI CONVERTIBLE

THE MINI Convertible entered a new generation in 2024 and it's as good as ever. We tried it in Cooper S form and found it truly wonderful to drive, with the characterful 201bhp four-cylinder turbo engine providing more than enough grunt, with the classic MINI handling shining through. The superb interior quality, kit list and practicality (compared with other small cabrios) makes it a worthy commendation.

MORGAN SUPERSPORT

A NEW Morgan doesn't come around very often, so there was pressure on the Supersport to deliver. There was no need to worry, though, because it's exquisite. It's much easier to live with than the old Plus Six, feels better built, and still gives you that traditional Morgan drive, combined with the performance and dynamics to keep more modern-looking rivals in check.

BUY THROUGH AUTO EXPRESS!

Scan the codes to view great deals on our winning and commended cars

OUR CHOICE

MAZDA MX-5

Homura (£35,155)

YOU can't really go wrong with any MX-5 trim level – whether you choose the basic Prime-Line with its 132bhp 1.5-litre four-cylinder, or the Homura and its uprated 181bhp 2.0-litre plus various chassis upgrades. If you can make the rather long £7,000 stretch to the latter, then you'll be rewarded with possibly the best MX-5 ever.

A ONE-tonne roadster with rear-wheel drive and a rev-happy, naturally aspirated engine with zero electrical assistance sounds like the stuff of yesteryear. And for many manufacturers that's sadly the case – but not for Mazda. The MX-5 has truly earned its legendary status in the automotive industry over the decades, and the current iteration might just be the best of the lot. The 'ND'-generation MX-5 is 10 years old now, but its formula is as refreshing as ever, with some notable upgrades in late 2024 only helping its case.

The 181bhp 2.0-litre four-cylinder with the six-speed manual got a new limited-slip differential, strut brace and revised dampers, while all models received a recalibrated steering rack to improve feel. These changes really added some polish to what was already our favourite cabrio last year, so a repeat win in 2025 isn't too much of a surprise.

The MX-5 roadster is also better to live with than ever before. The recent round of updates saw a new 8.8-inch touchscreen replace the old seven-inch unit; it runs the manufacturer's latest infotainment software, alongside an upgraded instrument panel. There are more USB-C ports, a frameless rear-view mirror, and in Homura spec you'll find a set of rather snazzy Recaro sports seats. Factor in the MX-5's excellent fuel efficiency as a result of its low weight (almost 50mpg is not unheard of) and the little Japanese sports car makes a compelling case for itself.

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER
CONVERTIBLE OF THE YEAR
Mazda MX-5

> **"The MX-5 has truly earned its legendary status in the automotive industry over the decades, and the current iteration might just be the best of the lot"**

MX-5
BK25 HWD
UK

> Whether it's the cabin design, the way it drives at low speeds, or how it feels when you're exploiting its limits, the Artura is one of the most usable supercars ever created

UK
R29 MCL
CARS.McLAREN.PRESS

PERFORMANCE CAR OF THE YEAR

McLAREN ARTURA

OUR Performance Car of the Year award goes to the stunning McLaren Artura. It may be the baby of the Woking brand's supercar line-up, but it's still hugely clever and very, very talented.

A key element to the Artura's make-up that sets it apart from the rest of the McLaren range is the plug-in hybrid powertrain. A 3.0-litre twin-turbo V6 is paired with an electric motor to deliver 690bhp, yet the car will also drive on electric power alone, which is perfect for silently threading through sleepy villages without disturbing the locals.

But while that powertrain is undoubtedly a highlight, it's the chassis that won us over even more. Many high-performance cars can be utterly sublime on a warm, dry day, but introduce some rain and they become prickly and unpredictable. Not so the Artura. If anything, we found wet conditions only highlighted its strengths further. Its beautifully balanced chassis and wonderfully communicative steering are even easier to appreciate when grip levels are slightly reduced.

There aren't many opportunities to explore the limits of such a fast machine on the road, but the Artura is so easy to live with on a daily basis. Key to this is the ride comfort, because McLaren's chassis engineers have worked wonders to create a car whose body control is so staggering at high speeds, yet can also deliver a relaxing, supple ride. The Artura is genuinely a more comfortable place to be than many family hatchbacks. Then there's the forward visibility, which is about as good as in any car currently on the market.

The view inside the cabin is pretty great, too, because the McLaren has delivered something of an ergonomic masterclass to further boost its usability. Indeed, whether it's the interior design, the way it drives at low speeds, or how it feels when you're exploiting its limits, the Artura is one of the most usable supercars ever created.

OUR CHOICE

MCLAREN ARTURA

Artura Spider (£221,500)

THE Artura comes in Coupé or Spider forms, but we'd take the latter. Its roof opens in just 11 seconds and at speeds of up to 31mph, plus there's only a modest 62kg weight penalty compared with the Coupé – a small price to pay for the joys of open-air motoring.

AUTO EXPRESS NEW CAR AWARDS 2025 COMMENDED

AUTO EXPRESS NEW CAR AWARDS 2025

WINNER

PERFORMANCE CAR OF THE YEAR

McLaren Artura

BUY THROUGH AUTO EXPRESS!

Scan the codes to view great deals on our winning and commended cars

COMMENDED

HYUNDAI IONIQ 5 N

LAST year's winner of this category still stands as the only mainstream electric car that we consider a stunning performance model, without the need to add the caveat "for an EV". That's because the Hyundai Ioniq 5 N doesn't bank solely on straight-line speed like many other performance EVs – its phenomenal chassis sets it apart from competitors.

PORSCHE 911

ANOTHER year passes, and even more phenomenal 911 models join an already stellar range. From the divine GT3 RS-powered S/T to the new hybrid powertrains and the back-to-basics 911 T, every area of the range offers buyers something that's as thrilling to drive as it is iconic to look at.

AFFORDABLE ELECTRIC CAR OF THE YEAR

RENAULT 5

OUR CHOICE

RENAULT 5

Techno 150hp Comfort Range (£26,995)

NATURALLY, compared with the base Evolution model, mid-range Techno trim piles on more kit such as a larger driver's display, built-in Google apps and services, plus 100 per cent recycled denim fabric trim and upholstery. But most importantly, it unlocks the option of the larger 52kWh battery that offers more flexibility for those who regularly venture beyond city limits.

THE devastatingly charming Renault 5 is one of those rare exceptions in life these days, where something that's considered to be 'fashionable', 'cool' and 'desirable' is also affordable. It's not overpriced like a £12 matcha latte; instead, this highly acclaimed, joyful EV is available from less than £23,000. It sounds too good to be true, yet it's very much real.

The new Renault 5 E-Tech taps into the heart-warming nostalgia for the iconic seventies hatch, with nods to the original model peppered throughout. Yet, the car's design has evolved to attract younger, contemporary customers as well. The same goes for the interior, where seats designed to resemble those from the legendary 5 Turbo are paired with high-definition screens and an intuitive, Google-powered infotainment system that's among the best in the business.

Underneath is a brand-new electric-vehicle platform, AmpR Small, and buyers have a choice of two battery sizes – 40kWh and 52kWh – that can offer up to 252 miles of range. Standard equipment across the whole range includes LED headlights, a 10.1-inch touchscreen, Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, an energy-saving heat pump and numerous safety systems. Sadly, the wicker baguette holder is sold separately.

You never feel like you're sitting in the cheap seats with the Renault 5, which is part of what makes this one of today's best EVs. It's deserving of the hype it has built up over the past four years, and which is sure to continue growing.

> **"This highly acclaimed, joyful EV is available from under £23,000. It sounds too good to be true, yet it's very much real"**

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER
AFFORDABLE ELECTRIC CAR OF THE YEAR
Renault 5

BUY THROUGH AUTO EXPRESS!
Scan the codes to view great deals on our winning and commended cars

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
COMMENDED

COMMENDED

FIAT GRANDE PANDA

THE Fiat Grande Panda is possibly the only car this year that can match the Renault 5 when it comes to cool vibes; and starting from £21,035, it actually costs less than its French foe. But the boxy supermini is more than a pretty face; its driving experience and 199-mile range are solid, the interior has lots of personality, and it's based on our 2024 Car of the Year, the Citroen e-C3.

RENAULT 4

THE Renault 4 is another blast from the past, and offers a solution to the limited practicality of its sibling, with more room for passengers and their stuff. It's based on the same platform, has the same easy-to-live-with interior, comes similarly well equipped and delivers up to 247 miles of range, thanks to a bigger battery pack. The retro SUV is also very affordable, starting from £26,995.

PREMIUM ELECTRIC CAR OF THE YEAR

BMW iX

OUR best Premium SUV of 2025 also happens to be an electric vehicle, which is why it takes our Premium Electric car gong, too.

The BMW iX has consistently been among our favourite cars in this category due to its staggeringly refined powertrain and chassis, its ability to both ride and handle better than its closest rivals, and the way it can enclose its occupants within a cabin that feels more concept car than posh SUV.

Not one to rest on its laurels, BMW treated the iX to a series of changes and updates this year, which combined to address what was previously one of the very few criticisms we could level at the brand's imposing flagship SUV: its range.

There are two key ways to improve the distance an EV can travel between charges: improve its efficiency or make the battery bigger. BMW has done both here. New power electronics and updated battery tech, combined with lower-resistance wheel bearings, have reduced energy consumption by eight per cent, says BMW.

Then there's the battery. The previous xDrive40 model has been replaced by the xDrive45, which brings with it 30 per cent more energy capacity, up to 94.8kWh. The mix of a larger battery and the more efficient powertrain saw us achieve around 320 miles of range in the real world, even on a drive that included plenty of motorway miles – and despite an 81bhp bump in power output over its predecessor, too; there's now 402bhp to play with.

Models higher up the iX line-up weren't forgotten during the updates, either – the mid-range xDrive60 gets an even bigger battery for a WLTP range of 435 miles, and the M70 model is quicker than ever. However you look at it, then, the iX is a stunningly capable electric vehicle; if money is no object, there is nothing around that can match it.

> **“However you look at it, the iX is a stunningly capable electric vehicle; if money is no object, there is nothing around that can match it”**

OUR CHOICE

BMW iX
xDrive 45 M Sport (£78,405)

THE starting price of the iX has risen during its mid-life refresh, but that's because the new model gains a much larger battery. With its generous power output, excellent real-world range and fabulous interior, we find it hard to see the need to go beyond the excellent xDrive45 M Sport.

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER
PREMIUM ELECTRIC CAR OF THE YEAR
BMW iX

BUY THROUGH AUTO EXPRESS!

Scan the codes to view great deals on our winning and commended cars

COMMENDED

LOTUS EMEYA

MOVING into EVs was a risky move for a brand known for its lightweight performance cars, but with the Emeya, Lotus produced a super-saloon that's up with the best. Performance in the range topper is mind-boggling, but there's also a variant with 'only' 612bhp. It's superb to drive, too, mixing comfort and sharp handling, while it feels truly luxurious inside.

PORSCHE TAYCAN

LAST year's category winner is still a car that we would wholly recommend. Performance fans can indulge in the super-fast Taycan Turbo GT, while everyone else can appreciate the efficiency, range and stunning charging speeds of other models. In every one, the tech comes in a handsome package that crucially still feels like a Porsche to drive.

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
COMMENDED

AFFORDABLE HYBRID CAR OF THE YEAR

MG3 HYBRID+

MG blew us away last year when it entered the dwindling supermini market with a car that was not only compelling in isolation, but really stood out when it came to performance, efficiency and value for money. Now, 12 months later, the MG3 is our Affordable Hybrid winner for the second year on the trot.

While most hybrid small cars pair a breathless petrol engine with an equally weedy electric motor, the MG3 combines its power sources to produce a healthy 192bhp. The result is an

OUR CHOICE

MG3

Hybrid+ Trophy (£20,995)

YOU'VE two specs to choose from when it comes to picking your MG3: SE or Trophy. The difference is around £2,000, but it pales into insignificance if you're paying on a monthly finance deal. We'd fork out the extra to have the Trophy's 360-degree cameras and other equipment.

impressive 0-62mph time of just eight seconds, making this a hatchback that feels peppy both in town and on the open road. Throw in an accomplished chassis and plenty of grip, and you've got a car that will comfortably show a Renault Clio or Toyota Yaris a clean pair of heels.

Yet what matters most in this area of the market, and the reason we rate the MG3 so highly, is its efficiency. The MG's hybrid power comes mainly from its e-motor, which means most of the time it feels like an EV. We love this style of driving, and it works wonders for fuel economy – our tests saw close to 50mpg without much effort at all, and considerably more with a lighter right foot.

Throw in a reasonably roomy cabin, strong equipment list and a seven-year warranty that beats the cover offered by many competitors – plus a price tag that undercuts all of its main rivals – and you're left with a set of ingredients that help make the MG3 our favourite Affordable Hybrid car of the Year for 2025.

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER
AFFORDABLE HYBRID CAR OF THE YEAR
MG3 Hybrid+

BUY THROUGH AUTO EXPRESS!
Scan the codes to view great deals on our winning and commended cars

> “The MG's hybrid power comes mainly from its e-motor, which means most of the time it feels like an EV. We love this style of driving”

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
COMMENDED

COMMENDED

DACIA DUSTER

WHILE the affordable end of the market is understandably geared towards small cars, Dacia once again bucks the trend by offering space and practicality at an attractive price point. The Duster Hybrid isn't as affordable as the pure-petrol version, but it trumps its simpler sibling when it comes to running costs and driveability. We love it.

TOYOTA YARIS

NO one has as much experience mixing petrol and electric quite like Toyota. The Yaris may be small, but that doesn't mean it isn't a mighty-fine affordable hybrid car. Super-efficient, good to drive and spacious enough for kids in the back, the Yaris finishes a close second to the excellent MG.

OUR CHOICE

BMW 530e

530e M Sport (£59,665)

THERE'S no base-spec Sport spec, as you might find elsewhere in the BMW range, so if you're after a plug-in hybrid 5 Series then M Sport is the entry point. All cars are well equipped, with full online sat-nav, a Harman Kardon stereo, heated seats and adaptive LED lights, so we'd not bother spending the extra £3,000 on the M Sport Pro package, which brings larger 20-inch wheels, plus slightly different exterior and interior trim.

PREMIUM HYBRID CAR OF THE YEAR

BMW 530e

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER
PREMIUM HYBRID CAR OF THE YEAR
BMW 530e

AT the top end of the hybrid market, plug-in powertrains remain the propulsion type of choice – and with EV ranges getting ever longer, these cars now have the near-unique ability to cover all bases. None of them does it better than the BMW 530e – our Premium Hybrid Car of the Year for 2025.

With a big 19.4kWh battery, the big saloon claims a zero-emissions range of up to 64 miles, and in our testing we've seen it come incredibly close to that. Better still, when the battery runs dry, the punchy 2.0-litre petrol engine will keep you on the road longer than any EV can; it's the flexibility of these cars – and the 530e in particular – that makes them so appealing. Add low Benefit-in-Kind (BiK) company-car tax rates, and the PHEV takes some beating.

But the plug-in 5 Series boasts so much more than an efficient electric motor. Being a BMW, the 530e is as sharp and fun to drive as any model in the maker's range, while the long wheelbase, advanced suspension system and peerless refinement make it a fantastically comfortable motorway car.

Inside, the Veganza leather alternative feels plush and the seats are very supportive, while the tech is among the most intuitive of any new car currently on sale – a feature that's only bolstered by BMW's excellent console-mounted clickwheel. Factor in fantastic practicality – this is a five-metre-plus PHEV executive car, after all – and the option of a Touring estate body, and there really are very few cars that manage to tick quite as many boxes.

BUY THROUGH AUTO EXPRESS!

Scan the codes to view great deals on our winning and commended cars

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
COMMENDED

COMMENDED

AUDI A3 TFSIe

IF you want the benefits of a long EV range and the safety net of an economical petrol engine, but don't want or need the footprint of an executive saloon or estate car, then the Audi A3 TFSIe is an excellent choice. With the ability to cover up to 88 miles without using a drop of fuel, this premium-badged family hatch is a force to be reckoned with.

MERCEDES C 300 e

MERCEDES has been fitting big batteries to its plug-in hybrids for longer than most manufacturers, and that experience shows with the fantastic C-Class PHEV. As with the award-winning 530e, it's available as a saloon or an estate, while the 71-mile EV range will allow you to do both short and long journeys emission-free.

PICK-UP OF THE YEAR

FORD RANGER

A THIRD straight win for the current Ranger (and a seventh overall) comes at a time of change for the pick-up truck class, but Ford's big-seller still has the strengths to keep it at the top of the pile.

The Ranger's familiar qualities remain, with a wide range of variants that offer everything from everyday usability to off-road adventuring and premium luxury, while the petrol-powered Raptor continues to offer a different take on the performance machine. Even base models have an air of quality that boosts their appeal over rivals, while the infotainment touchscreen and connectivity options are easy to use.

There's good space inside the double-cab variants, too, while Ford still offers single-cab and chassis-cab versions that are ready for work, too. Whichever model you choose, the on-road manners are great, and they're backed up by the knowledge that rough terrain won't be too much of an obstacle when the need to head off road arises.

Diesel power across the range delivers a good mix of efficiency and pulling power, while the 10-speed automatic transmission that's found on most variants helps to take the strain out of everyday driving.

Emissions legislation is catching up with the pick-up truck class, but Ford is tackling the new rules head-on with the plug-in hybrid Ranger. This sees CO_2 emissions reduced considerably over the diesel versions to help with running costs, while Stormtrak trim is offered exclusively with this model.

At this rate, we can't see the Ranger's reign at the top of the class ending any time soon.

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER
PICK-UP OF THE YEAR
Ford Ranger

OUR CHOICE

FORD RANGER

2.5 PHEV Stormtrak (£49,800 ex.VAT)

> Whichever version you choose, on-road manners are great, and they're backed up by the knowledge that rough terrain won't be too much of an obstacle when the need to head off road arises

BUSINESS users looking to cut costs but without compromising towing or payload capability are well served by the new plug-in hybrid Ranger. Ford claims that it offers up to 25.5 miles of all-electric range, and when we tested the PHEV, we still managed 35mpg when the battery was flat, which is better than the claimed figures for the diesel model.

COMMENDED

TOYOTA HILUX

THE pick-up class wouldn't be complete without the Hilux, and the current version does a great job of delivering reliability and off-road prowess in an appealing package. The GR Sport II offers a link to its Dakar-winning stablemate, while 48-volt hybrid tech helps trim the running costs.

VOLKSWAGEN AMAROK

THE Amarok delivers premium appeal to those looking for a trusty workhorse. Plush cabin trim and an upmarket exterior exude quality, while towing is a breeze. Add in VW's complimentary 5+ Promise warranty, servicing and roadside assistance package, and it's a safe place to put your cash.

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
COMMENDED

SMALL VAN OF THE YEAR

STELLANTIS SMALL VANS

WHEN it came to stacking up the numbers on our small-van category winner, the updated Citroen Berlingo, Fiat Doblo, Peugeot Partner and Vauxhall Combo all finished so close to each other that it seemed unfair to single out any one specific model. So for the first time in our judging history, we've awarded the gong to the companies' parent firm – in this case Stellantis – to share among its brands.

The Berlingo and Partner were first on the scene, but updates across the four models late last year have given them all a boost in terms of technology, exterior style and, for the electric versions especially, efficiency. From behind the wheel, these small vans benefit from a range of safety updates, while a standard-fit 10-inch touchscreen features connected services and a user-friendly interface to help you out during a day's work.

There are two body lengths to choose from and a crew van, too, while the whole line-up offers cargo volumes and payload capacities that mean users looking to downsize from a medium-sized model won't have to compromise on what they carry with them on a daily basis.

Diesel power delivers decent economy and power, and the new automatic gearbox is better to use than before. In the electric version, a slightly bigger battery boosts overall range, while the smooth transmission takes the stress out of daily driving, especially in town.

OUR CHOICE

Citroen e-Berlingo Enterprise Plus (£26,455, after PiVG)

THE electric version of the Berlingo undercuts the equivalent diesel automatic when you factor in the still-active Plug-in Van Grant, and if you only do local trips, it has all the range you should need for a day's work. Enterprise Plus trim adds some useful extras such as the Extenso through-loading bulkhead and twin passenger seats, plus a 10-inch instrument cluster.

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER
SMALL VAN OF THE YEAR
Citroen Berlingo

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER
SMALL VAN OF THE YEAR
Vauxhall Combo Cargo

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER
SMALL VAN OF THE YEAR
Peugeot Partner

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER
SMALL VAN OF THE YEAR
Fiat Doblo

COMMENDED

FORD TRANSIT COURIER

THE Transit Courier took the top prize last year, and its compact dimensions and car-like driving character help it hold on to a commendation in 2025. The running gear, derived from the Puma small SUV, delivers more fun than a small van should, while the bias towards petrol power in the line-up adds to its character.

RENAULT KANGOO

RENAULT'S smallest van is a past Van of the Year champion, and the expansion of our commercial vehicle categories means we can praise it once more. Electric and diesel options are efficient, while the Kangoo EV especially delivers an easy driving experience. The longer body option offers plenty of space, too.

MID-SIZE VAN OF THE YEAR

FORD TRANSIT CUSTOM

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER
MID-SIZE VAN OF THE YEAR
Ford Transit Custom

WITH electric, diesel and plug-in hybrid powertrains offered, plus a wide range of trim levels, as well as panel van, Double Cab, MultiCab and even camper options on the table, the Ford Transit Custom has a variant to suit virtually every use case imaginable, making it our category winner in the van's 60th-anniversary year.

Keep things basic, and the standard Leader model with 2.0-litre EcoBlue diesel power delivers a no-nonsense drive in two body lengths. But if you need to carry passengers, then the six-seat Double Cab In-Van could be for you. This comes in a wider range of trims, including the rugged adventure-inspired Trail option and racy Sport and MS-RT specs (which are also offered on the standard panel van), and given that the Transit Custom delivers such a grown-up drive, this could easily double as family transport.

Somewhere in between the two sits the MultiCab, with a five-seat layout (three in the front, two in the back) and an L-shaped bulkhead so long items can still fit in the cargo bay.

The strong diesel engines deliver good efficiency and power, while the electrified e-Transit Custom adds hushed refinement to the mix. There's even a performance-orientated model in MS-RT guise, where the electric powertrain is turned up to 281bhp (up from 215bhp as standard) to help give it the grunt to match the racier looks.

Overall, the Transit Custom sets the standard by which all other medium-sized panel vans must be judged, and it will have to be a very strong contender to knock the Ford off the number one position next year.

OUR CHOICE

Ford Transit Custom Double Cab In-Van SWB 2.0 EcoBlue 150 Trail (£43,265 ex.VAT)

THERE'S huge variety in the Transit Custom line-up, but the five-seat Double Cab In-Van variant stands out because it could be a more practical alternative to a pick-up truck, now that the tax regime for the latter has changed. It doesn't carry as much as the standard panel van, but the versatile second-row seats means it could double as family transport.

COMMENDED

STELLANTIS MEDIUM VANS

THERE'S so little between the Citroen Dispatch, Fiat Scudo, Peugeot Expert and Vauxhall Vivaro that we commended all four. They deliver car-like driving characteristics and excellent safety features, plus the choice of diesel and electric powertrains.

VOLKSWAGEN TRANSPORTER

VOLKSWAGEN'S new arrival picks up where the old Transporter left off, by offering quality and capability in a great all-round package. There are standard and long wheelbases, diesel and electric power, while the Standard, Plus and Pro trims offer an increasing amount of luxury through the range.

EF74 ZTR
CUSTOM

LARGE VAN OF THE YEAR

RENAULT MASTER

IT'S not often that a large van is redesigned from the ground up, but that's exactly what Renault has done with the latest Master. It all starts with a bold new front end, with lighting that's inspired by the firm's new wave of passenger cars – including distinctive C-shaped running lights. The upright nose does more than create an imposing look, because it's been carefully designed to boost aerodynamic efficiency and move the cab forwards to maximise cargo space.

Panel-van options include two roof heights and two lengths in three bodystyles, while wide-opening sliding doors and optional 270-degree-opening rear doors and access steps boost the versatility of this large van. Cargo volumes ranging from 10.8 to 14.8 cubic metres are offered, while the chassis cab, platform cab, Luton, dropside and tipper conversions give the option to create the work vehicle that's perfect for your job.

The aero-inspired body improves fuel economy, while the 148bhp and 168bhp dCi diesels deliver the best efficiency yet for Renault's largest panel van. The 2.0-litre units pack plenty of torque, too, and the heaviest haulers in the Master line-up can deliver 1.5 tonnes of payload if you need it.

All of this versatility comes hand-in-hand with a new driver-centric cabin, featuring plenty of safety features and large digital displays that put everything at your fingertips. Connected services do exactly that, allowing you to remotely link up to the vehicle via its smartphone or telematics software using the built-in modem. Renault's large van really is Master by name, Master by nature.

OUR CHOICE

RENAULT MASTER

Blue dCi 150 MM35 Advance (£41,300 ex.VAT)

WITH diesel or electric powertrains, a range of lengths and heights, plus a broad line-up of conversion options, there is likely to be a Renault Master to suit most business needs. The large-capacity diesel delivers lots of torque, and the more powerful 148bhp unit will make light work of most loads.

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER
LARGE VAN OF THE YEAR
Renault Master

COMMENDED

FORD TRANSIT

THE model that defined the van as we know it today is still going strong, and in its 60th year the full-size Transit gets our commendation. Expanding the line-up to include all-electric drive has boosted its appeal, while the engaging driving dynamics and good efficiency mean it's a top choice in the class.

STELLANTIS LARGE VANS

THE old stagers in the large-van class are the Citroen Relay, Fiat Ducato, Peugeot Boxer and Vauxhall Movano, but parent firm Stellantis has revised all four so that their appeal is boosted once more. The diesels pack a punch, while a big battery and powerful motor help the versatility of the electrified versions.

ELECTRIC VAN OF THE YEAR

RENAULT MASTER E-TECH

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW CAR AWARDS 2025
WINNER
ELECTRIC VAN OF THE YEAR
Renault Master E-Tech

AS well as shaking up the electric-car class with models such as the R5 and R4, Renault is putting its stamp on the commercial sector with a wave of EVs. The all-new Master E-Tech is the first of a number of models that are on the way, and it shows plenty of promise for what's to come.

The ground-up overhaul of the Master E-Tech introduces an 87kWh battery that delivers a range of up to 285 miles, and this is connected to a flexible 138bhp electric powertrain for quick responses. That range is achieved courtesy of an aerodynamic body (including a subtly curving rear roofline that doesn't restrict cargo volume) and the latest energy-recovery systems on board.

There's fast charging, with a 130kW maximum available; this can add 30 miles of range in six minutes, or take the battery from empty to fully charged in just over an hour. Connected services allow you to monitor and pay for charging, too.

All of this tech doesn't come at the expense of practicality. There are two lengths of panel van offering up to 13 cubic metres of space, while Renault offers chassis and platform-cab versions of the Master E-Tech ready for conversion, so there's no compromise if you need a bespoke EV. With so much versatility, the Master sets a template for the future electric Renault range that will make the firm a strong contender in commercial vehicles.

OUR CHOICE

RENAULT MASTER E-TECH

MM35 Advance (£47,100 ex.VAT, after PiVG)

THERE'S no real 'best' version in the Master electric line-up because varying use cases require different specs. But you can't go wrong with the standard model. It comes with the 10-inch touchscreen system, rear parking sensors and a vast cargo area to match the van's long range. If possible, we'd choose the reversing camera for extra peace of mind.

COMMENDED

FORD E-TRANSIT COURIER

LAST year's Van of the Year has been bolstered by the addition of an all-electric powertrain, which brings zero-emissions running and a range of up to 181 miles. It's Ford's smallest van, but a 2.9-cubic-metre cargo area offers lots of versatility in a compact package.

FORD E-TRANSIT CUSTOM

ADDING electric drive does nothing to spoil one of the Transit Custom's key strengths, because the EV is as good to drive as any other variant. Add in the versatile and spacious cargo area and neat tech, such as the Pro Power adapter for tools, and it's a strong contender.

DRIVER POWER CAR OF THE YEAR

MERCEDES GLE Mk4

CHOSEN not by us but by you, the large and luxurious Mercedes GLE has been rated the best car to own in this year's Driver Power customer satisfaction survey.

It topped half of the 10 main categories and reached the podium places in several others, while it was the elegant interior and exterior design that impressed owners the most.

The model is offered with petrol, hybrid and diesel engines, making it one of the very few cars on sale available with the latter fuel type. Our case study, Norman Eaton, loves the smooth and prodigious power delivery from his GLE 450 d's 3.0-litre diesel. He even returns 40mpg on the motorway, where the GLE thrives given its cushioned ride, slushy nine-speed automatic gearbox and fine sound deadening.

On the inside, owners love the Merc's superb quality, with plush leather, wood veneer and metal wrapping almost everything you touch. Even in its most basic form, the GLE is fully loaded with equipment and luxurious materials, negating the need for buyers to climb up the range and spend more. All cars get dual-screen displays as standard, with owners – including Norman – saying they like the GLE's balance of digital and physical controls.

It's not often a premium car does well in Driver Power – having spent extra, customers usually expect a lot more from a car with a posh badge – but in this case, the GLE has fulfilled buyers' expectations commendably, even managing to wiggle its way onto the podium for the value section – no mean feat for a car starting from almost £80,000.

> “It's not often a premium car does well in our Driver Power survey, but in this case the GLE has fulfilled buyers' expectations commendably”

DRIVER POWER MANUFACTURER OF THE YEAR

SUBARU

PICKING up two wins in a row, Subaru may not sell cars in the same quantities as other manufacturers, but the brand is still a hit with owners, topping this year's Driver Power brand survey and beating the likes of Mercedes, BMW, Ford and even Tesla in the process.

The Japanese manufacturer dominated this year's rankings, taking the top spot in seven of the 10 categories, with the only real disappointment being in the fuel economy section – a small price to pay given that owners were impressed by the firm's punchy range of powertrains. Subaru's highest score came in the ride and handling

IVER
WER

DRIVER POWER
As voted by drivers
WINNER
CAR OF THE YEAR 2025
Mercedes-Benz GLE

section, which is perhaps a takeaway from the marque's racing and rallying heritage.

Japanese cars are known for their build quality and reliability, and Subaru is no different in this regard, coming first in this category by an impressive three-and-a-half percentage points. Given that Subaru's UK line-up comprises only SUVs and estates, it's no wonder it also topped the board for practicality. Ultimately, the maker's two-year winning streak in the Driver Power survey shows that despite its subtle presence in the UK car market, the company is still deeply impressing owners in almost every single sense.

DRIVER POWER
As voted by drivers
WINNER
MANUFACTURER OF THE YEAR 2025
Subaru

AWARD WINNERS

CITY CAR Kia Picanto	**Commended** Hyundai i10, Leapmotor T03
SUPERMINI Fiat Grande Panda	**Commended** Citroen C3, Renault 5
FAMILY CAR Skoda Octavia	**Commended** Citroen C4, Dacia Jogger
ESTATE CAR Skoda Superb	**Commended** Toyota Corolla, Volkswagen Passat
SMALL COMPANY CAR Kia EV3	**Commended** Hyundai Kona, MG4
MID-SIZE COMPANY CAR Tesla Model 3	**Commended** BMW i4, Mercedes C 300 e
LARGE COMPANY CAR Audi A6 e-tron	**Commended** BMW i5, Volkswagen ID.7
SMALL SUV Renault 4	**Commended** Alfa Romeo Junior, Dacia Duster
MID-SIZE SUV Skoda Elroq	**Commended** Dacia Bigster, Tesla Model Y
LARGE SUV Skoda Kodiaq	**Commended** Hyundai Santa Fe, VW Tayron
SMALL PREMIUM SUV Volvo EX30	**Commended** BMW X1, MINI Countryman
MID-SIZE PREMIUM SUV BMW X3	**Commended** Lexus NX, Porsche Macan Electric
LARGE PREMIUM SUV BMW iX	**Commended** Porsche Cayenne, Range Rover Spt
LUXURY CAR Bentley Flying Spur	**Commended** BMW 7 Series, Range Rover
HOT HATCH Honda Civic Type R	**Commended** Alpine A290, Audi RS 3
COUPE BMW 2 Series Coupé	**Commended** Ford Mustang, Maserati GranTurismo
CONVERTIBLE Mazda MX-5	**Commended** MINI Convertible, Morgan Supersport
PERFORMANCE CAR McLaren Artura	**Commended** Hyundai Ioniq 5 N, Porsche 911
AFFORDABLE ELECTRIC CAR Renault 5	**Commended** Fiat Grande Panda, Renault 4
PREMIUM ELECTRIC CAR BMW iX	**Commended** Lotus Emeya, Porsche Taycan
AFFORDABLE HYBRID CAR MG3 Hybrid+	**Commended** Dacia Duster, Toyota Yaris
PREMIUM HYBRID CAR BMW 530e	**Commended** Audi A3 TFSIe, Mercedes C 300 e
PICK-UP Ford Ranger	**Commended** Toyota Hilux, Volkswagen Amarok
SMALL VAN OF THE YEAR Stellantis small vans	**Commended** Ford Transit Courier, Renault Kangoo
MID SIZED VAN OF THE YEAR Ford Transit Courier	**Commended** Stellantis med. vans, VW Transporter
LARGE VAN OF THE YEAR Renault Master	**Commended** Ford Transit, Stellantis large vans
ELECTRIC VAN OF THE YEAR Renault Master E-Tech	**Commended** Ford E-Transit Courier and Custom
DRIVER POWER (CAR)	**Winner:** Mercedes GLE Mk4
DRIVER POWER (MAKER)	**Winner:** Subaru
CAR OF THE YEAR	**Winner:** Overleaf

SYNDICATION SALES: Sarah Perks, Director of Content and Publishing
Contact: sarah.perks@autoexpress.co.uk

CREATIVE DIRECTOR: Darren Wilson **PHOTOGRAPHY:** Pete Gibson
DEPUTY ART EDITOR: George Vedmore **PICTURE EDITOR:** Dawn Grant
SUBBING, PRODUCTION AND REPRO: Andy Pringle, Paul Alton, Dave Kinnard
TEAM THANKS: Alex Ingram, Dean Gibson, Paul Barker, Richard Ingram, Phil McNamara, Jordan Katsianis, Ellis Hyde, Alastair Crooks, Kerry Lambird, Nicole Creasey and Dan Stark

CAR OF THE YEAR

SKODA ELROQ

SKODA
KY74 PPU

AEX IT'S always tough to choose an overall winner for our Car of the Year prize, but 2025 caused longer debates among the Auto Express judging team than most. There were several stars we could have chosen this year; a pair of deeply desirable Renaults in the form of the retro 4 and 5, plus the cheerful and keenly priced Fiat Grande Panda, were all strongly in the running during our deliberations.

In the end, however, we chose the car which, try as we might, we struggled to find any obvious faults with – and that all-round strength sealed its position: the Auto Express New Car of the Year winner for 2025 is the Skoda Elroq.

Skoda has regularly bagged various category wins at our annual awards, but this is the first time that the Czech brand has scooped the overall award since the Octavia took the prize in 2020. And if the Octavia has long been the car that has played more strongly to the brand's virtues than any other model in its line-up, the Elroq has now inherited the baton from its rangemate for the all-electric age.

Everything we've come to expect and love from a Skoda is right here, with value for money at the forefront of everything it does. This is an EV that starts from not much over £30,000, yet feels like a car that's sized a class above most alternatives at that price point. Step up the trim levels and models with more range become available; as many as 355 miles (WLTP) are on offer, but still at competitive prices.

Yet without genuine ability elsewhere, value for money isn't enough. The good news for the Elroq is that there's loads more to recommend. The cabin is both beautifully finished and incredibly spacious, making it an ideal family car, and everyone aboard will approve of its comfort, refinement and safety, too. Skoda's in-car tech is better than ever, while equipment levels are generous throughout. Then there are the powertrains, which offer plenty of smoothness and performance – there's even a hot vRS option, too.

If Skoda wanted a model to showcase what its brand is all about, the Elroq shouts those qualities louder than any other. It's as close to faultless as a family car can be, and that's why it's a deserving winner of our 2025 Car of the Year Award.

> "The Skoda Elroq is as close to faultless as a family car can be, and that's why it's a deserving winner of our 2025 Car of the Year Award"

BUY THROUGH AUTO EXPRESS!

Scan the code to view great deals on our winning and commended cars

SUBSCRIBE AND SAVE 39%

OFF THE SHOP PRICE

AUTO EXPRESS
NEW SK
OFFICIAL Big-selling SUV gets dramatic new look for 2025
TESTED FAMILY PLUG-INS
VW Tiguan battles BYD Seal U for PHEV crown
DRIVEN AUDI A5 AVANT

AUTO EXPRESS
HOT HATCH HEAD-TO-HEAD
BMW M135 vs AUDI S3
DRIVEN THIS WEEK
HYBRID VAUXHALL
MINI CONVERTIBLE
NEW BENTLEY
2 x NEW HYUNDAI SUVs
VOLVO XC90 VERDICT
NEW KIA EV9 REVEALED
25 STARS FOR 2025

PRINT& DIGITAL AVAILABLE

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

39% off the cover price

Get a 6-issue trial for just £6! Your subscription will then automatically renew every 13 issues at just £36.99.

Free Auto Express KeepCup

KeepCup: The original reusable, barista standard cup. Lightweight, durable, and fits most car holders. Your stylish, eco-friendly caffeine companion.

AUTO EXPRESS

Free Delivery

Never miss an issue with delivery to your doorstep at no extra cost.

Flexible options

We offer hassle-free cancellation or the option to pause anytime

TRY 6 ISSUES FOR £6

OP 208 GTi IS BACK!

Return of Peugeot's hot-hatch hero

ODA ENYAQ

OFFICIAL HONDA SUV
First look at firm's bold new 0 Series

DRIVEN NEW KIA EV3
Is bargain SUV now the one to beat?

PLUS Latest on Nissan merger plans

EN CORVETTE Z06 ● REVEALED NEW FACE OF BMW iDRIVE

zda sets sights on Tesla with 6e

market as it announces new rival for Model 3

NEWS

STYLING
New EV is identical to EZ-6, which is already on sale in China; 19-inch alloy wheels feature an efficient design to boost range

INTERIOR
Passengers have plenty of room front and rear; 14.6-inch touchscreen dominates dash

15 January 2025 11

SUBSCRIBE NOW

1 **Order online**
Visit subscribe.autoexpress.co.uk or call **0330 333 9491**

2 **Enter the offer code D25Q2**
and choose the offer that suits you best.

3 **Check out securely**
Complete your order, and await the arrival of our first issue. Sit back, relax and enjoy!

SCAN TO SHOP

Scan me with your smartphone's camera to go straight to our secure online store.

Calls to 03 numbers will be charged at your standard local rate. Prices are for UK only. The introductory trial offer is limited to one per household per 12 months. We reserve the right to cancel an order if the trial offer is misused. Alternative gift may be supplied. Please allow 28 days for delivery.

MARKETPLACE

THE ROOF BOX COMPANY

Loads to carry?

Travel in safety, comfort and style!

We stock the UK's biggest range of roof and rear boxes, and the widest range of roof and tow bar bike carriers.

We have the world's top brands, unrivalled experience, good value pricing - please visit our site or phone to discuss your requirements!

✓ Expert Advice ✓ Huge Choice ✓ Fast UK Delivery

roofbox.co.uk/aex 01539 621884

roofracks.co.uk

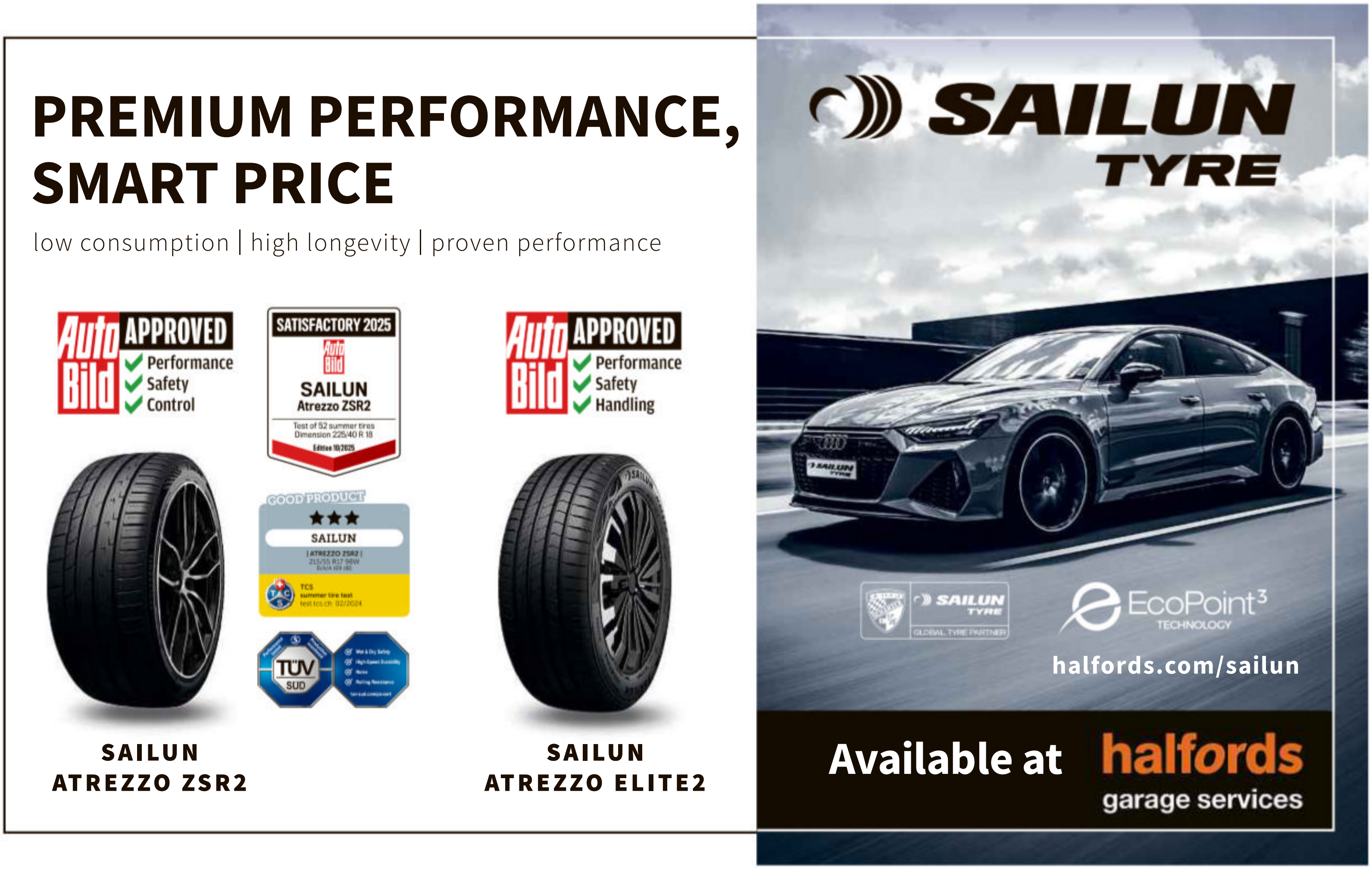
Specialist Thule dealer with over 30 years experience

Thule's new Force 3 roof boxes - good looks, good features, good value

- Streamlined design reduces air resistance and noise
- Dual side opening for easy loading and unloading from either side of your vehicle
- Includes Thule's top of the range SlideLock latching and locking system

Optimise carrying capacity with a set of Thule GoPack luggage bags

roofracks.co.uk THULE


PREMIUM PERFORMANCE, SMART PRICE

low consumption | high longevity | proven performance

Auto Bild APPROVED ✓ Performance ✓ Safety ✓ Control

SATISFACTORY 2025 Auto Bild SAILUN Atrezzo ZSR2 Test of 52 summer tires Dimension 225/40 R 18 Edition 10/2025

GOOD PRODUCT ★★★ SAILUN | ATREZZO ZSR2 | 215/55 R17 98W TCS summer tire test test.tcs.ch 02/2024

TÜV SÜD

Auto Bild APPROVED ✓ Performance ✓ Safety ✓ Handling

SAILUN ATREZZO ZSR2

SAILUN ATREZZO ELITE2

SAILUN TYRE

SAILUN TYRE GLOBAL TYRE PARTNER

EcoPoint³ TECHNOLOGY

halfords.com/sailun

Available at halfords garage services

98 NEW PRODUCT OPTIMATE 6S
Hi-tech charger revealed

99 MINI TEST HEAD TORCHES
New models in the spotlight

100 SNOW FOAM MEGA TEST
20 top brands compared

PRODUCTS

HOT KIT

NEW BRANDING
OSRAM dash cams were previously sold under the Ring brand, but have been renamed to avoid confusion with door bell cameras

New OSRAM dash cameras

Price: From £35 **Contact:** *osram.com*

BULB maker OSRAM has branched out to offer a range of dash cams. The new products are updates of cameras previously branded as Ring, including one which was named our Best Buy in 2023. The company has had to rename them to avoid confusion with the Ring security camera business, which is owned by Amazon.

OSRAM's new dash cam range kicks off with the ROADsight 1500. Costing £35, this basic device has a two-inch screen and an adjustable suction cup mount. It offers a 110-degree field of view, as well as an impact sensor to detect collisions and save clips automatically. Footage is captured at 1080P resolution and it can be used with a Micro SD card up to 32GB capacity. The £59.90 ROADsight 2500 also has 1080P footage and a two-inch screen, but uses an adhesive mount for semi-permanent fixing on the windscreen. It has a larger field of view (140 degrees) and a parking mode – although this requires the 12V socket to be permanently live to function, because there is no hardwire option. It can be used with a Micro SD card up to 128GB capacity.

The flagship model (our former test winner) is the ROADsight 3500, which captures video in higher-quality 1296P files. It features a three-inch screen and has GPS installed to record the speed and location data as part of the footage. This version costs £89.90 and is available packaged with a rear camera as well for an extra £20.

BOOKS

MG Cars 1930 to 2006: A Pictorial History

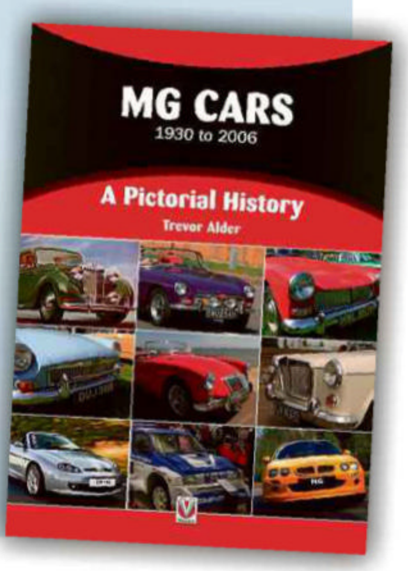
Trevor Alder (Veloce Publishing, *veloce.co.uk*)
Price: £17.99 **Rating:** ★★★⯪☆

THE eagle-eyed among you will notice that the period covered in this book – 1930 to 2006 – is pretty much the entirety of MG in the eyes of traditional British sports car fans. It spans from the formation of MG as its own company in 1930, through ownership by British Leyland, British Aerospace, BMW and the MG Rover Group, stopping just as the company folded and the naming rights were purchased by the Chinese SAIC Motor. And it really does cover every model manufactured within that period.

Previous books in this series have felt a bit like a list of stats, but this one breaks out of that mould a little. The entries on important cars are longer, and use period and press photography, plus modern pictures of the cars in situ – mostly at shows up and down the UK.

There are still stats and tech specs, of course, but it's nice to have historical context and something to read rather than just a list of figures.

It's a compact title and you'll have to squint to see some of the finer details in the photos. While it's still businesslike enough that it's unlikely to be a cover-to-cover pleasure read, even so it remains a very useful reference guide.



MG MODELS
From vintage saloons to Z Cars, all are covered

NEW PRODUCT

OptiMate 6-6A charger

Price: £119.90 **Contact:** *optimate.co.uk*

IF you have a modern car with a large engine and a stop-start system, your basic, old-fashioned battery charger might not be up to the job of topping up your cells.

The 12V batteries in modern cars will often be unusually large and have a more sophisticated composition to allow them to cope with the strain of repeated starts, in addition to maintaining electronics while the car is stationary and the engine off.

OptiMate's new 6-6A charger and maintainer claims to deliver the extra power needed to keep modern batteries performing properly.

With an enhanced six-amp output, the OptiMate 6-6A can cope with 12V lead-acid batteries up to 144Ah, covering the AGM and GEL types fitted to many prestige cars, SUVs, and vehicles with stop-start systems. It's also suitable for the larger leisure batteries found in motorhomes, camper vans and pick-up trucks, plus can cope with the small cells in classic cars and motorcycles too.

The OptiMate 6-6A features a microprocessor to automatically assesses the cells' condition and apply an ideal charge programme, restoring charge even when the battery is only outputting 0.5V. It's also capable of recovering deeply discharged and neglected batteries.

Once the battery is charged, the OptiMate's eco mode keeps the pack topped up, using less than 0.5W on standby power with no risk of overcharging or damaging a modern car's sensitive electronic systems.

The OptiMate 6-6A costs £119.90 and comes with a comprehensive three-year warranty, wall mounts, and two interchangeable leads – one with clamps for bench charging and another with a fuse-protected ring terminal for permanent connection to your car.

VERSATILE
With the ability to be wall-mounted or portable, the OptiMate 6-6A is a handy gadget, able to both charge and condition your car's battery

FIRST TEST

BLUETTI Elite 200 V2 portable power pack

Price: £999 **Rating:** ★★★★½
Contact: *bluettipower.co.uk*

SPENDING nearly £1,000 on any accessory for your car is a serious investment, but the BLUETTI Elite 200 V2 will really make a difference to drivers who need to have electrical power when away from the grid. That could mean anyone who loves camping, goes to outdoor shows, or needs a plug for tools in a garage at the bottom of the garden.

The Elite 200 V2 has a 2.1kWh battery, which will mean campers can swap the disposable barbecue and primus stove for an air fryer and coffee maker, and still have power to charge the whole family's phones.

In addition to a pair of three-pin AC outlets, the Elite V2 also has a selection of DC points, including USBs and a 12V socket. You can use them all at once up to an output of 2,600W.

We tried it running a kettle and an air fryer, which it managed to operate simultaneously with no issues – although it did seem to rip through the charge faster than we expected.

The Elite V2 is also a hefty lump, weighing 24kg, meaning you're going to feel it as you lift it up into your car's boot.

Charging to 80 per cent takes 50 minutes from the mains and you can set a time for unit to start topping up to make the best use of cheaper overnight energy tariffs. An optional (£229) hardwired 560W car charger will top it up in just over four hours while you're driving.

It's a brilliant gadget that's easier to use, cheaper and quieter than a petrol generator, and perfect for campers.

NightSearcher LightWave 1000R

Price: £35 **Rating:** ★★★★★
Contact: *nightsearcher.co.uk*

YOU'RE spoilt for choice when it comes to operating the latest NightSearcher head torch, because it has both spot and flood modes (or both together), while its light output can be dimmed to suit the task in hand and your required runtime. There's also red and flashing options, all selected in turn from a single button.

Usefully, it returns to the previous mode when switched on, so you don't have to tab through the various options each time. Although you do need to select the motion on/off mode every time the LightWave is turned on, it works reliably and there's a light to show it is operating.

The separate battery pack isn't ideal if you're on your back under a car, but in normal use you don't feel as if the unit is much heavier than its rival here, at 145g. The beam is white and bright, and the flood mode gives seriously wide illumination. Add in a keen price and you have our top choice.

MINI TEST

TESTED Head torches in the spotlight

SHINING LIGHTS: New NightSearcher LightWave takes on our 2024 favourite to see which one shines the brightest in a head-to-head comparison

Kim Adams

NIGHTSEARCHER has been our go-to for head torches since its 2021 test success and it has upped the ante with a new 1,000-lumens design – the LightWave 1000R.

As the name suggests, it can be powered on and off with a wave of the hand, but is it enough to continue NightSearcher's winning run?

We put it up against the Nitecore NU43, which impressed in our 2024 mini test, and turned off our workshop lights to find out which one shined.

We wore each while carrying out a series of automotive tasks, assessing ease of use and comfort. Beams and runtime were compared and we looked for power-saving modes, protection ratings and battery-state indicators before factoring in price.

The NightSearcher remains our choice with a versatile design at a cracking price. It just gets the win over the clever Nitecore, which yet again impressed us with its ability.

Nitecore High Output Lightweight Headlamp NU43

Price: £65.95 **Rating:** ★★★★½ **Contact:** *nitecore.co.uk*

TECORE
NITE

AT almost twice the price, you'd think it would be an easy choice between the two rivals here – but you'd be wrong, because the Nitecore ticks a lot of boxes. It's lighter, at 119g, and has the edge on comfort, although both are no problem to wear for long periods. And, despite lacking a separate battery, it showed the way in the runtime test. Both exceeded seven hours but its rival's light output dropped off more.

Nitecore claims 10 hours at 600 lumens – its max running output is the headline, but 1,400 lumens is only available in shorter bursts. The longevity is down to clever electronics, which reduce output when needed to prevent overheating. There are five light levels, including an eight-lumen option for reading, alongside red, flashing red, SOS and beacon settings. It also has the edge on protection, with an IP68 rating to its rival's IP54. Mode selection takes some getting used to, but this is top tech – at a top price.

Bilt-Hamber Touch-Less

Price: £9.95 **Size:** 1 litre
Cost per wash: 17p
Rating: ★★★★★
Contact: *bilthamber.com*

AUTO EXPRESS
BEST BUY
2025

WE have a bit of a love-hate relationship with Bilt-Hamber's Touch-Less. We highly rate the cleaning power and value for money, but are frustrated by the baffling instructions that require at least 20 minutes to follow.

We suspect many users won't make the effort, so in addition to following the supplied directions to the letter, we also tried a mix using a simple 1:10 dilution.

Both concentrations produced a clinging foam that cut through dirt noticeably better than most rivals here. The value is impressive, too, so Touch-Less takes the win.

BILT HAMBER
LABORATORIES
TOUCH-LESS
sugar based snow-foam pre-wash

MAC ALLISTER
CAR SNOW FOAM
FOAM
Diamondbrite
CERAMIC BLAST
SNOW
SNOW FOAM
HYDRO SNOW

SNOW FOAM

In a lather over which foam to use for cleaning you

CarPlan Polar White

AUTO EXPRESS
Recommended
2025

Price: £11.99 **Size:** 2.5 litres **Cost per wash:** 12p
Rating: ★★★★½ **Contact:** *mymotorworld.com*

THIS is the first time we've tried Polar White, and we assumed it would be cheap and cheerful rather than particularly effective. But we were impressed by CarPlan's snow foam.

The smallest container available is 2.5 litres, yet it costs less than some rivals' one-litre bottles. This, combined with a 1:9 mix ratio means the cost per wash is the lowest in this test.

Despite the dilution and the slightly watery foam it creates, the bright orange, satsuma-scented liquid does the job well when it's left to dwell on the car's paintwork.

CarPlan
Polar White
SNOW FOAM
High density foam
Satsuma

Halfords Advanced HP Snow Foam

AUTO EXPRESS
Recommended
2025

Price: £13 **Size:** 2.5 litres **Cost per wash:** 22p
Rating: ★★★★½
Contact: *halfords.com*

OUR previous winner has fallen down the rankings this year, mainly because its price has leapt up, removing one of the Halfords' key advantages over the Bilt-Hamber and the bargain-priced newcomer from CarPlan.

The snow foam has to be mixed at a 1:5 ratio, too, which means it doesn't look as cost-effective on a per wash basis. On the positive side, you're unlikely to need to pay for delivery, because it's available in any Halfords store.

Its cleaning power is impressive though, matching the top two competitors here, despite producing a thin foam.

halfords
ADVANCED
HIGH PERFORMANCE
SNOW FOAM

MEGATEST

ur car? We put 20 products through their paces

Angelwax
FASTFOAM
CarPlan
Polar White
SNOW FOAM
VP

BUY YOUR CAR KIT WITH CONFIDENCE
Every week, we extensively test all the latest car kit from tyres to trim cleaners. Scan the code to access our huge online test archive

Tom Barnard

SNOW foam has gone from being a niche product for professional valeters to an everyday part of many motorists' car-cleaning kit. It works in the same way as leaving dirty dishes in a sink to soak, by softening dirt and making it much easier to remove.

As snow foam's popularity has increased, so has the number of products on offer, to the extent that our usual two-year review cycle can't keep up. So in this mega test we have put 20 through our rigorous process.

We've chosen the most popular sizes, but if you use a lot of foam we'd advise buying in bulk to cut the cost per wash, especially if you order online. So which foams covered themselves in glory, and which were snow good?

How we tested

WE modified the test slightly this year, by applying the products to our Fiat's bodywork direct from a pressure washer's snow foam lance, in carefully masked sections, so we could see the cleaning power and foam levels at the dilutions suggested by the maker's instructions.

Once they had been left to dwell for five minutes, we rinsed them off using a normal hose's pressure, and judged the cleaning performance. This was followed by a jet wash's blast to gauge the level of dirt remaining.

Each foam was rated for its cleaning ability, ease of use and value for money per wash, based on 250ml of mixture per car.

> "FOAM WORKS IN THE SAME WAY AS LEAVING DIRTY DISHES IN A SINK TO SOAK, BY SOFTENING DIRT AND MAKING IT EASIER TO REMOVE"

Triplewax Vortex Blast

AUTO EXPRESS Recommended 2025

Price: £5.99 **Size:** 1 litre
Cost per wash: 14p
Rating: ★★★★½
Contact: *mymotorworld.com*

THE Vortex Blast appears to be closely related to the second-placed CarPlan product in terms of its active ingredients and formulation, but it is a vivid pink colour and has a different candyfloss aroma.

It's the cheapest foam in this test and has an economical 1:9 dilution ratio, but is beaten for value by CarPlan. The Triplewax cleans just as well though, so it might make sense if you are an occasional user or short on shelf space.

Triplewax
DIAMOND
VORTEX BLAST
SNOW FOAM
Candy Floss
For Use With Pressure Washers

Angelwax Fastfoam

Price: £12.95 **Size:** 1 litre
Cost per wash: 32p
Rating: ★★★★½
Contact: *angelwax.co.uk*

DESPITE the name, Angelwax's Fastfoam is designed to be left to dwell for 10 minutes – the longest of any product in this test. The cleaning ability is on par with the Bilt-Hamber product, even at the suggested 1:9 dilution rate.

The Angelwax only loses out on a higher placing due to the cost per wash. Buying a bigger five-litre bottle makes it much better value, at 15p per clean.

Angelwax
HEAVEN SCENT WICKED FINISH
FASTFOAM
PROFESSIONAL DETAILING SNOW FOAM

Squid Ink Froth

Price: £9.99 **Size:** 500ml
Cost per wash: 26p
Rating: ★★★★☆
Contact: *squidinkdetailing.co.uk*

WE'VE previously tried Squid Ink's alkaline Alka Froth, so were keen to try the less aggressive Froth, which is safe to use with wax coatings.

It works out at a pricey 50p per wash at the maker's suggested 1:9 dilution, but the foam it creates is too thick. We dialled the mix back to 1:19 and it was just right, cleaning just as well as at the lower ratio.

SQUID
INK
DETAILING
FROTH
SNOW FOAM
Pre-Wash

Hydro Snow

Price: £15.99 **Size:** 1 litre
Cost per wash: 57p
Rating: ★★★★☆
Contact: *hydrouk.co*

THIS is designed to be used in our Product of the Year-winning manual foam sprayer. We tried it both in the Hydro sprayer and in a pressure-washer lance. Both created a thick blanket of 'snow', which faded fast but did a good job of dissolving dirt.

The Hydro Snow misses out here mainly because of the high price, but getting it in a Hydro bundle deal will bring the cost down.

Autoglym Polar Blast

Price: £23.99 **Size:** 2.5 litres
Cost per wash: 40p
Rating: ★★★★☆
Contact: *autoglym.com*

THE Polar Blast is designed to be used as part of a three-part cleaning process using Autoglym's other Polar Products, which can also be delivered through a snow-foam lance.

It is effective at cleaning even on its own and produces a lovely layer of foam at the suggested 1:5 rate. But the Polar Blast is too expensive to be in with a chance of a win here.

AUTO GLYM
POLAR BLAST
SNOW FOAM

> "THE LOW PRICE LOOKS TO BE OFFSET BY THE SMALL 500ML BOTTLE, BUT THE RACE GLAZE CLAWS BACK AN ADVANTAGE WITH A VERY FRUGAL 1:20 DILUTION RATE"

Race Glaze Snow Foam

Price: £6 **Size:** 500ml
Cost per wash: 14p
Rating: ★★★⯪☆
Contact: *morethanpolish.com*

THE low purchase price initially looks to be offset by the small 500ml bottle, but the Race Glaze claws back an advantage with a very frugal 1:20 dilution rate, giving it one of the lowest cost-per-washes of any in this test.

The initial foam has a fruity smell, but the aroma and suds fade fast. While the cleaning power is good, it's not a match for the best products in this test.

SNOW
SNOW FOAM
Nano Super Foam
Hyper Blizzard Formula
GLAZE

Car Gods Arctic Storm

Price: £10.99 **Size:** 500ml
Cost per wash: 55p
Contact: *cargods.com*
Rating: ★★★☆☆

THE satsuma-scented Arctic Storm has an artificial-smelling citrus aroma, and the neon orange liquid creates a watery white foam with fairly efficient cleaning power, even at the suggested 1:9 mix ratio.

But it doesn't do anything the similarly scented CarPlan can't – and that costs less than a quarter of the price.

CAR GODS
TRITON
ARCTIC STORM
SNOW FOAM

Duel Engage

Price: £9.95 **Size:** 500ml
Cost per wash: £1
Rating: ★★★☆☆
Contact: *duelautocare.co.uk*

IN our last test we tried Duel's other snow foam, called Assault, so we were keen to sample the pH neutral and wax-friendly Engage.

When mixed at the suggested dilution ratio of 1:4, it produced a satisfying covering of suds, which clung to the car for several minutes before fading.

However, Duel Engage is simply much too expensive to do well in this test.

VP Snow Foam

Price: £7.95 **Size:** 500ml
Cost per wash: 36p
Rating: ★★⯪☆☆
Contact: *vp-uk.co.uk*

NEWCOMER VP's foam looks reasonable value for money, especially because it is formulated to be used at a 1:10 dilution rate.

Rather than being pH neutral, it is strongly alkaline, meaning it needs to be treated with respect on coatings that have been applied to a car's paintwork, as well as delicate materials.

It didn't clean well enough to make this caution worthwhile.

VP
SNOW FOAM
SNOW.
CLEAN

MacAllister Snow Foam

Price: £7.50 **Size:** 1 litre
Cost per wash: 19p
Rating: ★★⯪☆☆
Contact: *diy.com*

THIS own-brand product from the B&Q chain is cheap to buy, especially if you pick it up with your other DIY materials rather than pay for postage.

With a 1:9 dilution level for the odourless liquid, this foam is economical, too, and the instructions helpfully suggest the amount of capfuls needed to measure the mix.

Yet the weak foam produced had a mediocre cleaning ability.

MAC ALLISTER
CAR SNOW FOAM

GTECHNIQ W4 Citrus Foam

Price: £13.99 **Size:** 1 litre
Cost per wash: 35p
Rating: ★★★⯪☆
Contact: *gtechniq.co.uk*

ALTHOUGH the W4 liquid is surprisingly thick before it's mixed, the watery foam it produces is an anticlimax. It creates a pleasant scent though, which is partly due to the natural citrus degreasing ingredients, which keep the foam pH neutral.

This helped GTECHNIQ clean some of our dirt easily, but it struggled with dried-on debris.

GTECHNIQ
W4
CITRUS FOAM

Dodo Juice iFoam

Price: £17 **Size:** 1 litre
Cost per wash: 28p
Rating: ★★★☆☆
Contact: *dodojuice.com*

WHILE it looks expensive, at £17 for a one-litre bottle, the Dodo Juice's instructions suggest a dilution ratio of between 1:9 and 1:19 depending on how dirty your car is. We tried it at 1:14, which gave a reasonable cost per wash.

The foam is thick, but isn't pH neutral, so it will strip off wax coatings and may damage delicate trims.

Dodo Juice
iFOAM WAX

Autobrite Magifoam

Price: £9.95 **Size:** 1 litre
Cost per wash: 42p
Rating: ★★★☆☆
Contact: *autobritedirect.co.uk*

THE Magifoam's instructions say you should pour two inches of the liquid into an Autobrite snow-foam lance.

Given that this wasn't available at the time of testing – and we'd imagine people will have their own already – we had to guess at the required dilution, settling on 1:5. This gave a reasonable result, but there were no outstanding scores.

AD
AUTOBRITE
Direct
MAGIFOAM

Gyeon Q^{2}M FOAM

Price: £17.50 **Size:** 1 litre
Cost per wash: 73p
Contact: *cleanandshiny.co.uk*
Rating: ★★★☆☆

WE really liked the Gyeon – until we entered the costs into the spreadsheet and saw its overall score tumble. It's had a price increase since we last tested it, too.

When using the suggested 1:5 dilution ratio for Q^{2}M FOAM, it works out at 73p per wash, which is simply too high to be offset by the dense foam created and the strong cleaning performance.

Liquidtech Snow Foam

Price: £9.99 **Size:** 500ml
Cost per wash: 50p
Rating: ★★⯪☆☆
Contact: *liquiduk.com*

THERE is a lot to like about the Liquidtech Snow Foam. The squirty lid is easier to use with wet hands than a screw top, and the cherry scent is pleasant.

The Liquidtech produces a respectable level of foam from the gun, too. But the cost per wash is high, and the actual cleaning performance is disappointing.

LIQUID TECH
PREMIUM SNOW FOAM

Infinity Wax Wipeout

Price: £8.99 **Size:** 500ml
Cost per wash: 41p
Rating: ★★⯪☆☆
Contact: *tetrosyl.com*

WE liked the Wipeout's easy-to-use pop top, and the flexibility to vary the dilution based on the muckiness of the vehicle to be washed.

We tried it at the suggested 5:1 ratio for a heavy soil, and the result was only middling. The company makes other foams with more bite, but they aren't pH neutral and will strip wax coatings.

INFINITY WAX
WIPEOUT
SNOWFOAM

Diamondbrite Ceramic Blast

Price: £10.49 **Size:** 500ml
Cost per wash: 87p
Rating: ★★⯪☆☆
Contact: *diamondbrite.shop*

THE bottle claims the Diamondbrite is 'super concentrated', but it actually needs double the amount of the front runners in this test.

That means you'll end up paying a whopping 87p per wash. The cleaning performance was disappointing, too, so we hope that the ceramic ingredients may add unseen protection in the longer term.

Diamondbrite
CERAMIC BLAST
CERAMIC SNOW FOAM

Verdict

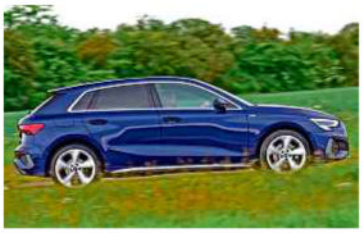
BILT-Hamber's Touch-Less is back on top. Look past the baffling instructions and it offers great cleaning at a low cost. Second place goes to a surprise newcomer: CarPlan's Polar White. It doesn't have quite the power of the Bilt-Hamber, but is unbeatable value for money. The final podium place goes to our previous champ, Halfords' Advanced HP. It's still a great product, but a price rise has hit its scores.

carwow
LEASEY

LEASEY COME, LEASE AND GO

Get a great deal on your next car lease.
From a name you can trust, all in one place.

carwow.co.uk/leasey



106 DRIVER POWER AUDI A3 Likes and dislikes revealed

108 BUYER'S GUIDE NISSAN FIGARO Retro cabrio in the spotlight

112 3 CAR GARAGE AWARD WINNERS Champs for cost of a Tesla

BUYING CARS

> "IT'S WORTH CHECKING AREAS AROUND LARGE US AIR BASES, WHICH WILL HAVE MORE LHD CARS"

SHOULD YOU BUY A LEFT HOOKER?

AEX DRIVING a left-hand-drive (LHD) car might seem daunting for some of us – especially in the UK – but there are lots of reasons why it might be worth considering putting one on your shopping list.

If you're doing so, then there's a high possibility you're after a vehicle that wasn't made in right-hand drive in the first place. And these kinds of sought-after, enthusiast models – whether they're American muscle, European exotics or something more niche – are likely to be more expensive to buy than right-hand-drive alternatives that are officially sold in the UK. That's not only because of the vehicles' inherent rarity, but also due to the expense associated with bringing them here in the first place.

Importing a car to the UK can be costly, so avoiding this can work in your favour. If you do import a car yourself, you'll need to make sure it has been registered with HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA). You'll also need a certificate for Individual Vehicle Approval if the car originated from outside Europe, or a European Certificate of Conformity if it came from Europe. There are also import taxes to bear in mind, and some insurance companies will charge more to cover left-hand-drive models.

But LHD cars can be budget-friendly, with prices often depending on their location, because certain areas of the UK have higher volumes of left-hookers than others. Rural zones tend not to have as high a proportion, but you'll find more in cities like London or Birmingham. It's also worth checking areas around large US air bases such RAF Lakenheath, because stationed US service people often bring their beloved rides along with them – typically American marques, as you'd expect. These cars will have likely been brought over on 'concession' tax rates, so ensure the proper documentation is available when transferring ownership.

If you find a LHD car you like, you should know that many garages may struggle to source parts – so contact specialists before you buy. After this, make sure the vehicle is roadworthy. Because it's now driving on the other side of the road, you'll have to ensure the headlights don't dazzle drivers; if necessary, get some corrective stickers.

You'll also have to convert the speedometer and odometer from kilometres per hour and kilometres to miles per hour and miles. Most modern cars will be able to do this via the infotainment menus, but older cars may need their clocks physically changed.

Anyone with a UK driver's licence can drive a LHD car in the UK, but you'll be sitting on the nearside of the road, so you'll have to allow space for oncoming cars – and overtaking, when visibility won't be as good. Things are more complicated if it's a manual car, because you'll have to get used to shifting gear with your right hand instead of your left – but at least the gearbox and pedal layout will be the same.

ALASTAIR CROOKS

Auto Express' senior news reporter gives his expert insight on what to do if you're considering buying a left-hand-drive car in the UK

DRIVER POWER

OWNER VIEWS ON THE UK'S BEST CARS

RIDE AND HANDLING

YOU SAID "The suspension is a bit too stiff for country roads, making longer drives rather uncomfortable after a while. The handling is fine, but the A3 in 35 TFSI form is hardly what you'd call a car for driving enthusiasts."

INFOTAINMENT AND ELECTRICS

YOU SAID "The infotainment system has far too many menus and it seems impossible to remove some stuff. I don't need Alexa in the house, so why would I want it in the car?"

"I like my A3 e-tron for its blend of sporty performance, a smooth ride and great economy on longer trips."

INTERIOR AND COMFORT

YOU SAID "The leather seats are comfortable and supportive on even the longest journeys, and the dash looks great. But it's not just an attractive design; the instruments are also very clearly laid out. Perhaps the best thing, though, is the superb cabin quality."

PRACTICALITY AND SPACE

YOU SAID "There is limited rear-seat space, which is a bit too tight for comfort for taller passengers. Also, the boot is one of the smallest in its class. But at least I can put the seats down to fit bigger items in."

> "A perfect balance of luxury and practicality. The interior feels premium, the infotainment is intuitive, and the car handles well."

POSITION 36th

Audi A3 Mk4

Richard Dredge

HAVING been launched in 2020, the A3 had a nip and tuck last year, gaining a new look, extra equipment and improved infotainment. We like the Audi's practicality, high-quality cabin and efficient engines, but owners aren't so impressed. A ranking of 36th is disappointing for such an important small car – and one with a premium badge – but five years after its launch, we perhaps shouldn't be surprised.

Of the 35 attributes we measure, the A3 gets into the top half of our table in just three. The best score is 22nd for the all-round visibility, while the interior quality comes 24th and touchscreen sensitivity is rated 25th. On a more positive note, there aren't any attributes where the Audi sits right at the bottom of the table. It does come close though, because the brakes are in 49th place, while the boot capacity and fuel economy are both in 47th. Front-seat comfort ranks a disappointing 44th and servicing costs are in 45th spot, which is perhaps no surprise, because official Audi dealers aren't known for being cheap.

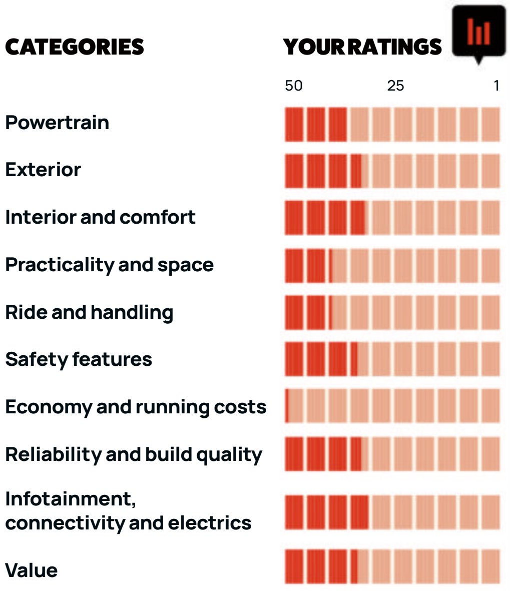
Take away the highs (such as they are) and the lows, and you're left with a lot of mid-table scores that don't stand out for being especially good or bad. These include 27th for the ride comfort as well as the quality of the exterior finish, while the interior design manages a 26th spot. Rear-seat legroom is a mediocre 35th, which is also where smartphone connectivity is ranked; the infotainment as a whole sits one place behind in 36th, whereas the reliability is one place ahead, in a so-so 34th slot.

MPG AND RUNNING COSTS

YOU SAID "The hybrid powertrain provides good performance, but there doesn't seem to be a penalty in fuel consumption – it's also really economical. Even high-spec models escape the road tax supplement, but servicing is costly."

OVERALL SCORE 84.09%

USED PRICES FROM: £11,000 **YEARS:** 2020 to present
CO₂: 123-127g/km **FUEL ECONOMY:** 49-53mpg (35 TFSI)
BEST OPTIONS: Sonos hi-fi, head-up display, Storage Pack, Technology Pack Pro, space-saver spare wheel



DATA BY CATEGORY
Bars illustrate 50-1 rankings per category. The longer the bar the better the car's ranking

YOUR VIEW

Reader comments reflecting how they feel about their car

> "It has a sleek interior and some advanced safety tech. I like the automatic emergency braking and lane-departure warning."

> "Audis can be spartan, and to get the full premium feel you need to spend a lot on option packs like the Tech Pack or Comfort & Sound."

> "I dislike the complex technology. It's impressive, but can also be complex and difficult to use, especially while driving."

WHY DRIVER POWER IS IMPORTANT

Every year thousands of owners share thoughts, opinion and experiences of the cars they own. This not only helps potential buyers, it also helps makers shape the new generation of cars. Make sure your voice is heard.

SCAN THE CODE TO TAKE THE SURVEY
Tell us about your car and you could be in with a chance of winning £100 Amazon voucher

WANT ONE?

Scan the QR code to view used Audi A3s that are on sale right now on the Auto Express marketplace

USED BUYER'S GUI

FROM £1,000 Retro convertible is a sensible buy if you do your homework

Richard Dredge

IT'S hard to get excited by a Nissan Micra, but reclothe this rather mundane supermini as a retro urban runabout and you can create a level of hysteria usually reserved for cars powered by something rather more exciting than a turbocharged 1.0-litre four-cylinder petrol engine.

Indeed, the Figaro was so popular when it was revealed that Nissan had to run a lottery to choose who would be able to buy the car. The initial plan was to produce 8,000 examples, but by the time production was wound up, no fewer than 20,056 had been built – with more than five times this many people having entered the ballot to buy one.

The car was created exclusively for the Japanese market, but it wasn't long before examples of the Figaro were being imported to the UK, with the model becoming as popular here as in its home market. More than 30 years after the last Figaro was made, this cute-looking retro car has become a cult classic, and as a result it's well served by specialists as well as clubs.

HISTORY

NISSAN unveiled the Figaro at the 1989 Tokyo Motor Show under the slogan 'Back to the future'. It would be another two years before the model – the work of a Nissan special projects group called Pike Factory – went into production, and the cars were released in three batches between February and June 1991. The Figaro was one of four different retro 'Pike Cars' released by Nissan; the other three were the Pao, Be-1 and S-Cargo.

WHICH SHOULD I BUY?

THERE isn't much to separate one Figaro from another, apart from condition and bodywork colour. Four paint hues were offered, each representing one of the four seasons. Buyers could choose between Topaz Mist, which is the rarest with just 2,279 made, Emerald Green (5,632 built), Pale Aqua (3,989) and Lapis Grey (8,156).

With all Figaros getting leather trim, a fold-back cloth roof, air-con and a three-speed automatic gearbox, there wasn't much scope for the firm to offer extras. The Figaro didn't wear Nissan badges and there was no powered option for the opening roof mechanism, but the company offered 55 accessories, many of which are now very sought after; they're listed in detail on the Figaro Owners' Club. These include chrome add-ons, mud flaps, a CD player, various bits of luggage and floor mats.

A really cherished Figaro will come with a full complement of supplied accessories, such as the original space-saver spare wheel and the associated jack, a tonneau cover and a tool kit. You might even manage to find an example with the original red breakdown flare, which is clipped to the left-hand side of the passenger footwell.

PRICES

BREAKERS start at £1,000 or so, but for just £2,000-£3,000 you can buy something scruffy with potential. There are few takers for such cars; most buyers want something really tidy and these cars are worth £8,000-£12,000.

Exceptional examples can go for up to £15,000, but by definition these models are very few and far between. However, for just £5,000 you can buy something that is basically sound but just needs a some tidying up; it'll need a bit of paint or the leather might need some TLC, but those are easily fixed. And the best thing is you won't be out of pocket in a few years' time, because Figaro values don't fluctuate very much.

CHECKLIST

SPOT THE ROT

A lot of Figaros have been struck down by corrosion, with the sills and wheelarches the areas worst affected. Also check the rear light reflectors and the lower edge of the rear window surround for rust.

RAISE THE ROOF

All Figaros have a folding fabric roof, which can shrink. Also, the mechanism and latches get damaged by ham-fisted owners, so check it all. Although it's cheap to replace the roof, the seals are no longer available.

KEEP IT COOL

The standard air-conditioning uses the now-banned Freon 12 refrigerant. It can be topped up, but not with the modern R134A alternative, because it'll damage the system. Beware of cars that have been converted.

ENGINE ROOM

Engines are reliable, but turbos seize. There's no kick from the turbo (the power delivery is very linear), so it's easy to assume nothing is wrong. Blue exhaust smoke shows a possible problem.

POPULAR
More than a quarter of the Figaros made were imported into the UK, where the Nissan is still popular with buyers

ONLINE VALUATION TOOL
Head over to our valuation tool to check prices on a specific model.

NISSAN
FIGARO

POLISHED ACT
Chrome-plated trim can be found throughout the interior and exterior, which adds to the vintage appeal

DE Nissan Figaro

STYLING
Touches of thirties and fifties design helped make the Figaro stand out when it was launched. It attracted buyers in their droves when new and the car still has plenty of fans today

RUNNING COSTS

ALTHOUGH some people still use their Figaros as everyday transport, most are now weekend toys. As a result, the maintenance schedule isn't too punishing; Nissan specified every six months or 6,000 miles, but an annual service is all that's required for most Figaro owners nowadays.

The Figaro Owners' Club (*figaroownersclub.com*) has published the complete maintenance schedule on its website; expect to pay around £250-£300 for an annual service, with fresh brake fluid required every other year at £75 or so. The cambelt needs to be renewed every five years or 62,500 miles, at about £500 each time. The Figaro is eligible for classic-car insurance, which should be cheap, while road tax costs £220 per year. Fuel bills should be low; the Figaro is officially rated at 45mpg, which is achievable.

RECALLS

THERE haven't been any recalls, because the Figaro was never officially sold in the UK, so all examples here are grey imports. That isn't necessarily a problem because the Japanese MoT is strict, but any car brought in recently could be quite ropey and it's often impossible to track down any history for imports from Japan.

That's why it's worth having any Figaro inspected by an expert before you buy; the owners' club can help, but there are also numerous specialists around the UK, including the Figaro Shop (*thenissanfigaroshop.co.uk)* in Oxfordshire, which helped with some aspects of this guide.

But with all of these cars now 34 years old, any manufacturing weaknesses will have become apparent by now and been fixed.

ON THE ROAD

THERE'S nothing about the Figaro's driving experience that will thrill you, but it's perfectly competent in general. With just 75bhp on tap, plus 106Nm of torque, the Figaro isn't an accomplished motorway cruiser, but around town and on A and B-roads it's fine. The turbocharged 987cc engine provides swift enough progress at lower speeds.

The three-speed automatic gearbox seems dated in a world of eight-speed transmissions, while the power steering feels vague and the ride is so-so. But none of these things seem to bother Figaro owners at all.

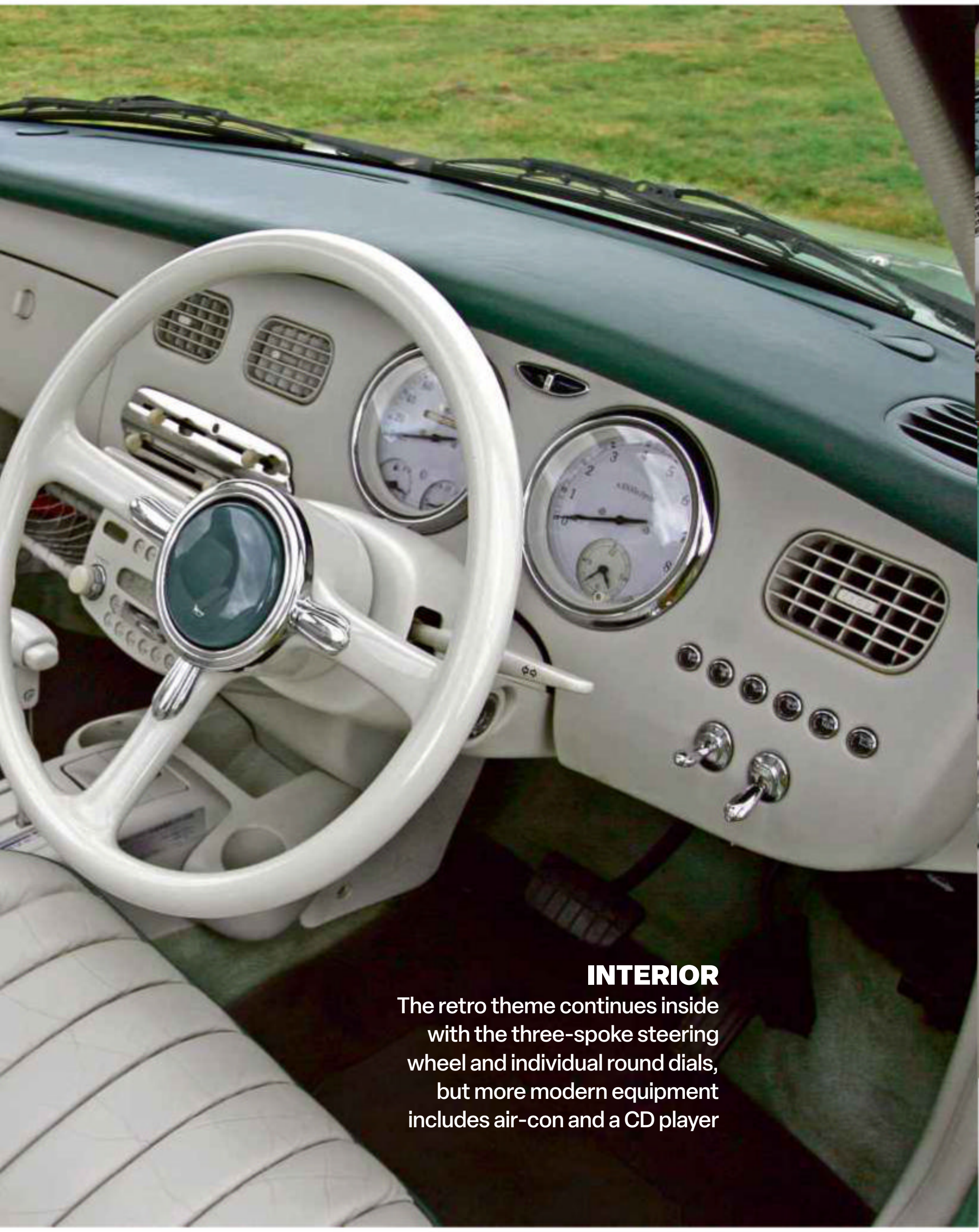
RUNNING COSTS

Owning a Figaro and keeping it on the road shouldn't cost a fortune. A thriving owners' club and specialist garages sweeten the deal further

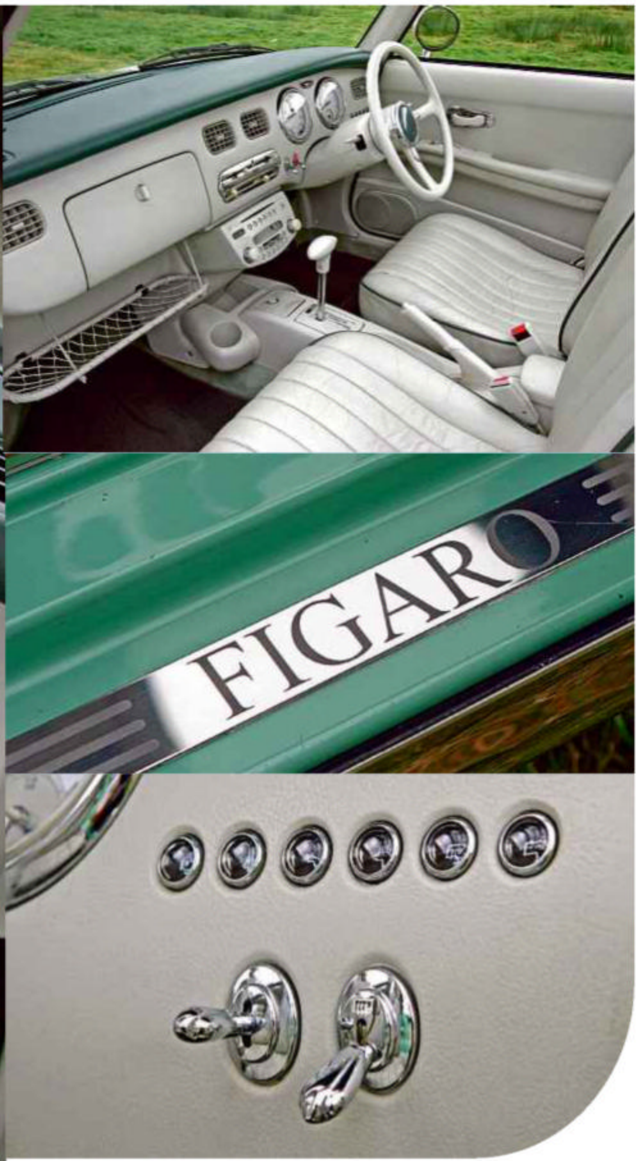
ALTERNATIVES

THERE'S nothing like the Figaro, with its cutesy styling and modern running gear. If you were to buy an older classic, you wouldn't have the turbocharged, small-capacity, fuel-injected engine, all of which the Suzuki Cappuccino offers.

Unlike the Figaro, the Suzuki is a kei car (Japan's smallest breed of passenger car), so its engine is tiny (657cc) and so are its proportions. You could also seek out one of the other Pike Cars; the Pao is the most retro in its design, but it's very rare in the UK. Or you could go full-on classic and buy something like a Citroen 2CV; it's in plentiful supply, affordable and has great club and specialist support, but it makes a Figaro seem sporty.



INTERIOR
The retro theme continues inside with the three-spoke steering wheel and individual round dials, but more modern equipment includes air-con and a CD player



DETAILS
Leather seat upholstery, plus chrome sill scuff plates and toggle switches are typical of the little extras that make the Figaro feel more special

INTERIOR

MUCH of the Figaro's design was inspired by cars of the thirties and fifties. Everywhere you look there are chrome details and neat touches from the switchgear to the CD player. The front seats offer decent comfort, but the token rear seats are best used for luggage, because the two boots (one of which is the roof well) are very small.

DRIVER POWER

THE Figaro hasn't appeared in any of our surveys, so we asked Kevin Fagan who runs the Figaro Owners' Club, what owners think of their cars. Of course they love the design and the social scene within the club, but he cautions: "It's not unusual for someone to buy a Figaro, keep it for a few years then sell it on because of its limitations. They're leisurely to drive, they need to be garaged and security is a problem, which isn't ideal for something that stands out so much."

VERDICT ★★★½☆

YOU either love or hate the Figaro. If you're in the former camp and have now decided that you must have one, your first port of call is to join the owners' club (*figaroownersclub.com*), which runs an online classifieds site for its members (*figarotrader.co.uk*).

To put the Figaro's popularity in the UK into context, at one point there were more than 5,000 of them here, or a quarter of the cars produced, all personally imported. Some of those have since been exported, but there are still plenty to go round.

With stable values, a great club scene and low running costs, the Figaro makes a lot of sense – but you must go into ownership with your eyes open.

HYUNDAI IONIQ 5 £18,390

1

THE Hyundai Ioniq 5 wasn't the first pure-electric Auto Express Car of the Year, but it did set a precedent when it took the trophy in 2021: every winner since has been an EV. But we stand by our decision to crown it top dog – it remains one of the finest cars of its type.

We'd recommend a long-range model; an Ioniq 5 fitted with the 73kWh battery can officially cover almost 300 miles on a charge. A 10 to 80 per cent charge is possible in just 18 minutes, and probably explains why some used examples have comfortably covered 50,000 miles or more. Factor in the standard five-year warranty from new and you can buy with peace of mind too.

If you missed the opportunity to snap up this Hyundai Ioniq 5, there are several more examples available through Auto Express.

"We stand by our decision to name the Hyundai Ioniq 5 as top dog – it remains one of the finest cars of its type"

3 CAR GARAGE

Auto Express Car of the Year trio for less than a Model 3

By Richard Ingram

OVER the past quarter of a century, Auto Express has named an eclectic set of Cars of the Year, and to celebrate 2025's winners, we've picked three champions for what we think would be a compelling three-car garage: an EV for cost-capped commutes, a big SUV for family duties and summer holidays, plus a sports car for the weekend – all for less than a top-spec Tesla Model 3.

Most of us would be lucky to ever own one Auto Express Car of the Year, but these three winners cost less than £20k each

TOYOTA GT86

£18,899

2

IN a break from the norm, it was the Toyota GT86 sports car that was named Auto Express Car of the Year back in 2012. It triumphed over big cars, small cars, SUVs and saloons to win the top prize, with judges praising its pin-sharp handling, rev-hungry engine and competitive pricing.

The rear-wheel-drive coupé didn't sell in huge numbers in the UK, but with everything now going electric, and compact 2+2s all but disappearing from the new-car market, values have stayed strong – you'll need the best part of £15,000 for a high-mileage model, and closer to £20k for a newer, well looked-after variant with the all-important manual gearbox.

The GT86 has a wonderful manual 'box, but an auto was also available – and a few are in the Auto Express classifieds.

"Values have stayed strong – you'll need the best part of £15,000 even for a high-mileage model"

VOLVO XC90

£18,495

3

IT says a lot about the Volvo XC90 (our 2015 Car of the Year) that it is still on sale today – albeit with a few recent tweaks. The consummate family SUV still looks fresh, while the roomy, tech-filled cabin continues to feel upmarket.

Our choice is an early model with just over 100,000 miles on the clock, but the diesel engine is well proven, and with Inscription trim you get all the bells and whistles. Few cars are able to whisk a driver and six passengers from London to Land's End in such comfort.

Think diesel is a dirty word? There are plenty of petrol and plug-in hybrid XC90s available right now on Auto Express.

"The consummate family SUV still looks fresh today, while the roomy cabin continues to feel upmarket"

HAVE new cars for real-world drivers ever been better, more versatile, efficient, safe and fit for purpose? Not in my lifetime. As this week's Auto Express New Car Awards clearly demonstrate, there's nowt wrong with the current crop of state-of-the-art showroom products. Follow our unbiased advice, do your homework, be open-minded, factor in discounts and insurance groups plus likely resale values, then draw up your personal list of the very best models in the price category you're working within. Only then will your contender cars reveal levels of excellence and quality that consumers on limited budgets (that's most of us) could only dream about in the recent past.

> **"WE USED TO BE CONTENT WITH CARS THAT WERE MERELY GOOD OR, OCCASIONALLY, VERY GOOD. NOW SOME GREAT MODELS ARE WITHIN OUR FINANCIAL REACH"**

We used to be content with cars that were merely good or, occasionally, very good. Now, some great models are within our financial reach. A car doesn't necessarily have to be big, quick, expensive and outrageously good-looking to qualify as a modern great. The Renault 5 E-Tech, winner of our Affordable Electric class, proves my point. Think top speed of 93mph, a more than reasonable sub-£24k starting price, plus a design that's unapologetically understated, not tastelessly tacky. Not by coincidence, its longer, taller, more spacious big bro, the classless sub-£27k R4, is officially commended in the same EV category – in addition to topping the Small SUV league.

I've no doubt that Fiat would not have priced its Grande Panda range so attractively had its Stellantis Group sibling rival Citroen, plus its external enemy Renault, cheekily 'incentivised' it to do so with provocatively low pricing for, respectively, the C3 and R5.

When I attended the 1989 launch of the original Mazda MX-5, I knew and predicted in this mag that it'd be a hit for decades to come. Some 36 years later it has again been crowned as the Convertible class winner. Officially, prices are from £28k. But with zero per cent finance and discounts averaging £3k-plus, it's as affordable now as it was then.

Talking of affordability, decent petrol-electric cars don't come much cheaper than the sub-£19k MG3, which picks up the Affordable Hybrid prize. This latest victory for the Chinese manufacturer should be yet another wake-up call for the likes of VW which, inexplicably, still drags its heels in bringing hybrid tech to buyers with limited budgets.

But it's Skoda that can consider itself the serial champ this year. Wins for Octavia (Family Car), Superb (Estate), Elroq (Mid-size SUV) and Kodiaq (Large SUV) were impressive enough. But the much-coveted Car of the Year gong for the Elroq is the icing on the cake.

Our awards do feature some more pricey picks, but all of the cars mentioned in this column can be had, brand new, for between about £19,000 and £36,000. All are credible, appropriately priced and world-class. Why buy lesser, sometimes more expensive rivals that aren't?

MIKE RUTHERFORD

facebook.com/autoexpress @autoexpress

MOTORING'S MOST OUTSPOKEN COLUMNIST AND FOUNDING MEMBER OF AUTO EXPRESS

AUTO EXPRESS

NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE Weds 9 July

REVEALED

Wraps are off the all-new Kia EV5

Pictures and full details of Euro-spec model set to take on Skoda Elroq

TESTED

Vauxhall Mokka vs Hyundai Kona

Small SUV shoot-out as the latest hybrid heroes go head-to-head

DRIVEN

We hit the road in hi-tech Lexus RZ

First drive of revised car, now with cutting-edge steer-by-wire tech

www.autoexpress.co.uk

4 PINTS
THE NIGHT
BEFORE

One in five drink drive prosecutions happen the morning after[A].

AlcoSense quickly and accurately tells you your blood alcohol level, so you don't become one of them.

excel

Auto Express BEST BUY 2023

£99.99

- Uses a 64mm² version of exactly the same fuel cell sensor used in several Police breathalysers
- Adjustable don't drive alert to any limit world-wide
- Full colour screen and easy to use interface
- Multi award-winning

0.27 mg/L
alcosense
excel

Available at Halfords & Selected Boots

halfords Boots

alcosense® PERSONAL BREATHALYSERS

Order securely at **alcosense.co.uk** or call **01628 778885**

A: Source: DfT Road Accident Data 2015, B: Review of the AlcoSense Pro, 24/12/15. Intellectual Property: www.alcosense.co.uk/ip. © AlcoSense Laboratories, part of Now Group UK Ltd, Unit 3 MEC, Cordwallis Street, Maidenhead SL6 7BE

DOUBLE SPEED-WAX

Auto Express PRODUCT AWARDS WINNER 2024

Award-winning
paste wax with lasting shine
and unbeatable durability.

**"it was easily the best performer in our test. It topped the scores at every stage"
– Auto Express magazine**

BILT HAMBER LABORATORIES
DOUBLE SPEED-WAX
carnauba polymer paste wax
250ml

Auto Express PRODUCT AWARDS WINNER 2016
Auto Express PRODUCT AWARDS WINNER 2017
Auto Express PRODUCT AWARDS WINNER 2018
Auto Express PRODUCT AWARDS WINNER 2019
Auto Express PRODUCT AWARDS WINNER 2020
Auto Express PRODUCT AWARDS WINNER 2021
Auto Express PRODUCT AWARDS WINNER 2022
Auto Express PRODUCT AWARDS WINNER 2023

www.bilthamber.com

01277 658899